



THE INDEPENDENT

Tuesday 25 November 1997 (IR50p) 45p No 3,462

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TODAY'S NEWS

Exclusive: women face cancer risk from labs

Women are being put at risk of dying from cervical cancer because some laboratories are conducting too few smears to ensure accuracy. One in five cervical cancer screening laboratories – 33 out of the 181 in England – are not doing enough to ensure that the checkers are properly experienced.

Government officials have been worried about the problem for years and 18 months ago, the health department raised the problem again. Only last week Warwickshire health authority announced it was re-examining the smears of 18,000 women after checks showed some abnormal results had been missed. The mistakes have been blamed on the inexperience of screeners at a laboratory at St Cross Hospital, Rugby. Page 5

Unsecret agent caught

An MI6 officer yesterday admitted he had disclosed confidential information about the security agency. Richard Tomlinson faces up to two years in jail after he became the first MI6 agent to be successfully prosecuted under official secrets legislation for 36 years. Last year he sent a publisher in Australia a seven-page synopsis outlining chapters of a proposed book about his experiences in the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). But he insisted that he'd put no agents at risk. Pages 8

Moralising Earl's 'girls'

Earl Spencer was accused of committing adultery with up to 12 women yesterday. Jeremy Gauntlett, representing Lady Spencer in a South African court, said the earl had "lived an adulterous life" – a claim strenuously denied last night by Earl Spencer's lawyers. The hearing in the high court at Cape Town will decide whether divorce proceedings should continue in Britain or South Africa. Lady Spencer wants them to be heard in Britain.

Mr Gauntlett told the court the divorce case would include details of Lord Spencer's affairs with up to a dozen women. "Within months of the marriage the plaintiff was unfaithful," he said. "There had been a whole series of liaisons thereafter." Page 2

SEEN & HEARD

Baroness Blackstone, the cerebral minister in charge of trying to bring drop-outs back to learning, had her own brush with disaffected youth. As her ministerial limousine stopped at traffic lights in north London, three young squeegee merchants started to clean the car windows. One of them looked about ten and the others were not much older.

Winding the window down she asked: "Do you know who I am? I'm the minister of state for education and you should be at school." One replied that his mother was penniless and he had to go out to work so that his family could eat. But the fascinating moral and political debate which ought to have followed was brutally truncated: the hoarding of angry motorists meant the minister was forced to drive on.

TELEVISION The Eye, page 12
CROSSWORDS Page 32 and
the Eye, page 9
WEATHER The Eye, page 10

Web address: <http://www.independent.co.uk>

Bloody revenge for stag hunt ban



To the slaughter: At least 36 red deer stags out of an estimated population in the Quantocks of 76 have been shot since the ban on hunting began Photograph: Planet Earth

At least half the red deer stags in the Quantock Hills have been slaughtered in a savage reaction to the ban on hunting introduced by the National Trust and the Forestry Commission. Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, reveals a bloody propaganda exercise.

The Quantock Staghounds said that if they were banned from carrying out their sport, the wild red deer on the Somerset hills would be wiped out by poachers and farmers fed up with their crops being eaten.

Opponents of hunting dismissed this as scaremongering – but it seems the hunt was right. At least 36 stags have been shot and sold to game dealers in the past few weeks, out of the 76 counted last month. Their heads have been piled together and photographed. They have been

killed by farmers who no longer see any reason not to shoot them now that hunting is banned on trust land. One, an occasional hunt follower, told the Independent: "I thought sod the National Trust, I'm going to shoot anything that comes into my fields. They didn't consult us about their ban." He said more than 36 had been killed, and he had made £10,000 by selling their venison.

Since the trust intended shooting deer on its land to control numbers, it would make money from selling their

carcasses. "Why shouldn't we? It's our fields that feed them when they come off the hills."

Nigel Hester, the trust's local deer expert and custodian, said: "It's very sad, but it's certainly not going to change public opinion or make the trust's council reconsider its decision on hunting. We can't be held responsible for people slaughtering the deer."

The herd eats cereals and young grass but farmers had been willing to tolerate losses. Many are hunt followers, and also felt the hunt limited crop

damage by killing deer and keeping them on the move.

Last April the trust's council decided to ban staghunting on its 1,300 acres in the Quantocks after a report showed deer suffered extreme exhaustion, pain and damage in the chase. It reaffirmed its decision last month after a legal challenge was defeated.

The Forestry Commission has issued no new licences for hunting on its land in the Quantocks. The hunt now has far less freedom to roam; it goes out less often and kills

fewer deer. There is no law stopping farmers shooting deer on their land. Carcasses are usually sold to a licensed dealer for venison, for up to £300.

The slaughter, motivated by a combination of anger, greed and the desire to make a point, has taken place over the past six weeks.

It came to light four days before the crucial second reading of MP Michael Foster's Bill to ban hunting with dogs. If it carries on at this rate, the herd could be in danger of extinction within a few months.

Japan trembles, but it's business as usual here

The market apocalypse predicted by some commentators following the collapse of Japan's fourth largest stockbroker, failed to materialise yesterday. But Diane Coyle and Lea Peterson saw the ambulance chasers gather to mop up the mess.

Just as the smell of blood draws the sharks, news of the collapse of Japanese stockbroker Yamaichi Securities had the headhunters gathering outside its City of London office as employees turned up for work yesterday morning.

During a sombre half-hour meeting the 300 staff were told the bad news: their jobs would go as the operation was wound down during the next six months. About 40 got their redundancy notices yesterday.

At least they had the comfort of knowing that City recruitment consultants were so keen to see them snap up that representatives were already lurking outside, waiting to pounce, on a cold, grey morning. The headhunters were outnumbered only by those other predators, journalists and camera crews, on Yamaichi's steps.

A spokesman for one recruitment group, Parallel International, said it was "a bit rich" of journalists to accuse the headhunters of being vultures. But he admitted: "We've had a very fruitful morning." Parallel had received "around a dozen calls" from Yamaichi staff, and had made it onto a shortlist of headhunters selected to help employees find new jobs.

All of Yamaichi's 7,500 employees worldwide will lose their jobs now that it has buckled under the weight of debts thought to be equivalent to about £15bn. The Japanese staff are unlikely to be as lucky as their English counterparts in finding alternative work, with many of



Yamaichi president Shohhei Nozawa speaks at a Tokyo press conference

Japan's banks and brokerages in an extremely fragile financial state.

Yamaichi concealed the extent of its difficulties through irregular deals which shifted its losses around different parts of the group, and even clients' accounts. Banking experts reckon other financial institutions will turn out to be on the verge of collapse, and expect the Japanese government to have to close several others before the crisis has run its course.

Yasuo Matsushita, the governor of the Bank of Japan, tried to dampen fears of a financial meltdown by announcing that the Government would draft legislation intended to increase the size of bail-out funds for banks, insurance companies and brokerages to protect against future failures.

Meanwhile, the reaction in the financial markets to Japan's biggest post-war business collapse was muted. Shares in London ended lower, but it was certainly not the apocalypse some experts had been predicting at the weekend.

The Tokyo stockmarket, closed for a public holiday yesterday, is nevertheless expected to be volatile when it reopens. Shares in South Korea, which has been forced by its own banking crisis to go to the International Monetary Fund for an emergency loan, plunged to an all-time low yesterday.

As long as other financial markets stay relatively calm, the crisis that has spread from the smaller Asian tigers like Malaysia and Thailand to the far bigger economies of South Korea and Japan is likely to spill over through two channels: trade and direct investment.

There is little doubt that recession in Asia will dent exports to the region by American and European companies. Asia has become an increasingly important export market thanks to its rapid growth.

More worrying for the British economy is the likely impact on direct investment. Korean companies have lately joined the Japanese as significant investors in manufacturing in this country, mainly in the north east and South Wales. South Korea's LG has made the biggest-ever single investment with its £1.7bn electronics plant in Newport, expected to create 6,000 jobs.

Japanese investments such as those by car giants Nissan, Honda and Toyota are thought not to be vulnerable because they are both mature and profitable. Experts said a question mark could hang over some of the existing South Korean projects. Even if they are all safe, the flood of Japanese and Korean investment to Britain could slow to a trickle for the foreseeable future.

Full story page 22, Comment page 21, Outlook page 23.

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COLUMN ONE

Downing Street in a spin over Humphrey

Humphrey the former Downing Street cat was yesterday declared alive by the Prime Minister's office - and they even had photographs to prove it.

The Government's most senior spin doctors yesterday organised a photocall to deny reports that Cherie Blair had ordered Humphrey, the Downing Street cat, put down because he had a kidney complaint.

"The Blairs like cats," said the Prime Minister's spokesman. "The suggestion that Cherie got rid of Humphrey is a vile slur."

Cherie Blair said the whole family was sorry that Humphrey's failing health meant he had to retire somewhere quieter, away from the hectic pace of life in Downing Street.

The reports that Humphrey's death warrant had been signed by Mrs Blair had been started by Alan Clark, the diarist and former Tory minister. Mr Clark, an animal lover, said the claims that the Prime Minister's wife had an allergy against cats was a cover-up for a dislike of his misdeeds on the floor of the Cabinet Office.

Downing Street insisted Humphrey was not extinct, deceased, and had



not been put down. The Number Ten mouser may have used up most of his nine lives, but he was resting in retirement at his new home, somewhere in a "quiet suburban place".

The Independent's suggestion that this could be a cemetery was brushed aside by the Prime Minister's top spokesman. Humphrey was alive, and well, and they had the photographs to prove it.

Like a hostage held by a guerrilla group, Humphrey was photographed with a copy of yesterday's paper to prove it was a recent mug shot.

A Press Association photographer who was called to a secret location to take the portrait of Humphrey was said to have recognised the black and white moggie.

The plot surrounding Humphrey's departure from Number Ten deepened as Downing Street also disclosed that he could soon be replaced by another cat. "In due course there will be a Downing Street cat but the public should not either send cats or fax us about cats because the choice will be made by Number Ten," said the spokesman.

Under further questioning, it emerged that another mature cat was waiting in the wings, having already been picked by the Blairs for the vacancy, sparking rumours in Westminster that it must have been vetted by Peter Mandelson, the Minister without Portfolio.

The sudden exit from Downing Street may have left Humphrey feeling like Cabinet ministers after a reshuffle, discarded and on the scrap heap. But his owners say he is enjoying the peace and quiet away from it all.

They are asking for the press to abide by Humphrey's appeal for privacy, after the photocalls. There is a voluntary code of practice on press intrusion, and the use of a long lens to capture Humphrey in flagrante in the rose bed could lead to renewed calls for legislation.

— Colin Brown

PEOPLE



Lottery prize stuns youngest winner

The youngest-ever National Lottery jackpot winner yesterday admitted that he "needs a few days" to let his new-found millionaire status sink in.

And the only ambition football fan Stuart Donnelly, 17, of Neilston, Renfrewshire, could think of fulfilling with his £1,923,077 share was acquiring a seat in Celtic's directors' box at Parkhead, Glasgow.

While his delighted parents, May and Danny, celebrated yesterday with champagne, Stuart, (pictured above), had to stick to soft drinks because of his age.

Nervously facing reporters at Camelot's Glasgow headquarters, Stuart, a trainee pharmacist, admitted that he has no idea what to do with his share of the £25m bumper anniversary draw. "It's not really started to sink in, I'm going to go away for a few days to get it sorted out in my head first," he said.

When asked if he was not a little disappointed that he had to share the cash with 12 others, he said: "I'm

happy with what I've got - the money's in the bank just now, and I can live off the interest."

Stuart, who lives with his father Danny, plays the lottery regularly and said he had spent £5 on tickets because of the big jackpot. Reliving the magical moment when he struck it lucky, Stuart said: "I was writing down the numbers as they came out. I was quite happy with three numbers, then four, then five. When the last number 39 came out I shouted 'jackpot', and my Dad jumped on me."

But Stuart has yet to decide if he will continue with his training at Neilston Pharmacy, and his studies at Stow College. He plans to take care of his family, and pledged to pay for medical care if his brother Shaun, who suffers from a rare genetic disorder, needs it.

Danny, 42, said of his son: "He is a very caring, down-to-earth boy, very quiet. Hopefully this will not change him."

Earl Spencer denies adultery

Earl Spencer was accused of committing adultery with up to 12 women yesterday as a South African court began the first leg of what is likely to be an acrimonious divorce from his estranged wife.

Jeremy Gaumlett, representing Lady Spencer, said the earl (pictured) had "lived an adulterous life" - a claim strenuously denied outside court last night by Earl Spencer's lawyers.

The hearing in the high court at Cape Town will decide whether divorce proceedings should continue in Britain or South Africa. Lady Spencer wants them to be heard in Britain, where the couple were married eight years ago, because her settlement would be greater in the country where most of her husband's assets are held.

Mr Gaumlett told the court the divorce case would include details of Lord Spencer's affairs with up to a dozen women. "Within months of the marriage the plaintiff was unfaithful," he said. "There had been a whole series of liaisons thereafter."

He called a British family lawyer, Jeremy Posnansky, as a witness and asked whether Earl



Spencer's alleged adultery would affect the size of a settlement in a British hearing. Mr Posnansky said it would.

Last night, a spokesman for Earl Spencer, who would like the hearing to be held in South Africa, said: "These are allegations that have been made by Lady Spencer's counsel and are strenuously denied by Lord Spencer."

The earl, brother of Diana, Princess of Wales, moved to South Africa last year. Lady Spencer, the former model Victoria Lockwood, moved to a property nearby after overcoming a series of eating disorders.

— Steve Boggan

Hunt for wife

Fears were growing yesterday for the welfare of a wealthy architect's wife who disappeared 12 days ago after dropping her daughter off to visit her estranged husband.

Gracia Morton, 40, has not been seen since leaving four-year-old Celeste at Jonathan Morton's home in Holland Park, west London on 12 November.

Her sister, Constanza Thomas, yesterday appealed for anyone with information about Mrs Morton's disappearance to come forward. Mrs Morton was separated from her husband, a 59-year-old architect.

Argentinian born Mrs Morton, who is also a British citizen, was last seen when she left her former family home without saying where she was going. Her small Rover car was left outside the house.

The Metropolitan Police have called in murder squad detectives, and are concerned that Mrs Morton has not used her credit cards or withdrawn any cash since her disappearance.

Police were believed to have searched Mr Morton's London home and his cottage in Oxfordshire.

UPDATE

HEALTH

Worried shoppers turn to organic food

Food scares and the BSE crisis have helped the market for organic food to double in Britain in the last two years, a new report says today.

No longer associated with vegetarians and "committed activists", three quarters of all shoppers are "sympathetic" to the idea of buying organic food, although young people without children are the most likely to buy them, said the report from retail analysts Mintel.

Sales of organic meat in particular have gone up from £12m in 1994 to £26m last year. Fruit and vegetables are still the biggest organic sellers, worth £124m a year and making up more than 60 per cent of the market.

Overall, including dairy products, flour, cereals, oils, preserves, tea and coffee, the market in the UK is worth £260m. Nearly three-quarters of the produce is imported. Mintel said the market looked set to almost double again before 2001.

— Glenda Cooper



MOTORING

Car of the year prize for Alfa Romeo

One of the motor industry's most highly-sought after awards was presented yesterday to Alfa Romeo, the Italian car makers.

Its 156 model, designed to take on BMW and Audi, raced away with the European Car of the Year award. The car had won critical acclaim when it was launched earlier this year for its style and handling.

The 130 mph model beat off the challenge of the Volkswagen Golf to take the prestigious prize. It goes on sale in the UK next February. Prices are expected to start at £17,000.

"Make no mistake, this is one of the finest mainstream Alfas ever built," said Steve Cropley, editor in chief of Autocar magazine, the official organiser of the event in the UK.

— Randeep Ramesh

EDUCATION

Specialists for primary schools

Primary schools should dispense with "old-fashioned ideas" about one teacher to one class, says a report from school inspectors.

Good use of subject specialists raises standards but even the best schools are not using teachers' subject expertise properly, according to inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education.

The traditional "one teacher one class" organisation places heavy demands on primary teachers who have to cover a much wider range of subjects than their secondary school colleagues, says the report.

Teachers are increasingly well qualified and often have wide knowledge of one subject from their training. Yet their knowledge is not being used. Very small and very large schools are best at using subject specialists.

The report points out that international surveys suggest that better use of specialists may explain why children in some European and Pacific Rim countries do better than their British counterparts in some subjects.

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.35	Italy (lira)	2,893
Austria (schillings)	20.05	Japan (yen)	212.50
Belgium (francs)	58.90	Malta (lira)	0.62
Canada (\$)	2.33	Netherlands (guilders)	3.21
Cyprus (pounds)	0.83	Norway (kroner)	11.69
Denmark (kroner)	10.93	Portugal (escudos)	289.63
France (francs)	9.54	Spain (pesetas)	240.25
Germany (marks)	2.86	Sweden (kroner)	12.51
Greece (drachmes)	455.08	Switzerland (francs)	2.32
Hong Kong (\$)	12.69	Turkey (lira)	313,056
Ireland (pounds)	1.09	USA (\$)	1.65

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indicative purposes only

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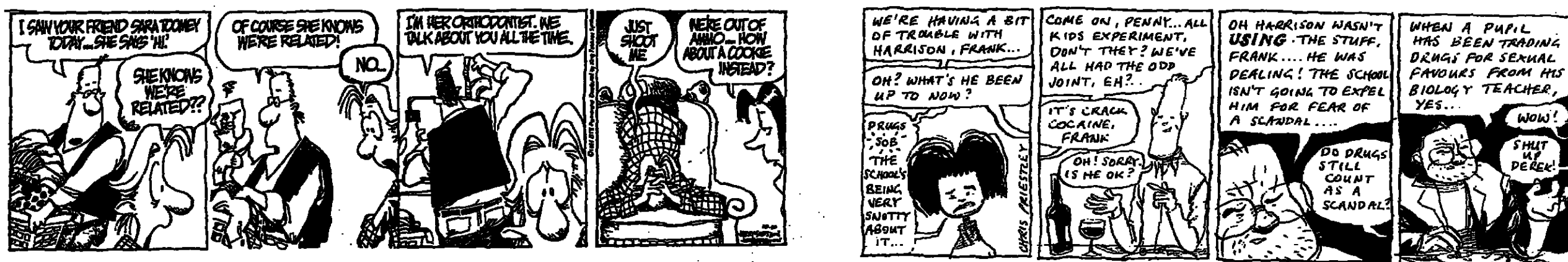
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by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

7.30 FOR 8

by Chris Priestley



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TV saved from ban on hidden cameras

The Broadcasting Standards Commission has backed down over a Draconian new privacy code that could have ended the right of documentary makers to film in secret.

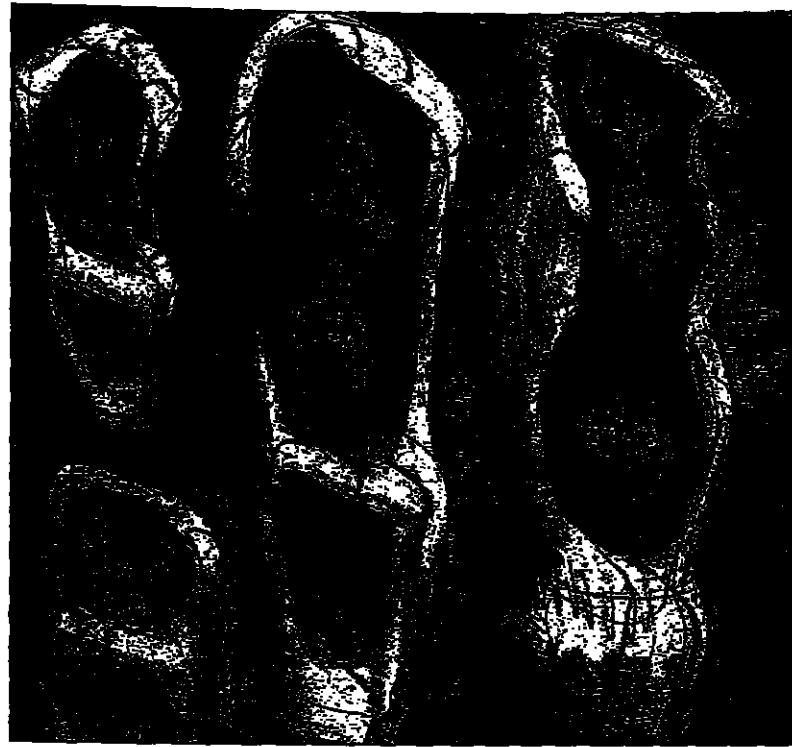
Television researchers raised concerns after a report in *The Independent* in April that the BSC was proposing a code that would require an "overwhelming" public interest before programmes like *World in Action* or *Dispatches* could use hidden cameras. The BSC has now rewritten the code before it becomes law in January so that reporters just need an "overriding" public interest.

"The first draft was appalling", said Bernard Clark, who produced the Channel 4 *Dispatches* programme that used a hidden camera to expose Sotheby's involvement in smuggling art treasures. "Since *The Independent*'s report the BSC has whittled down the code so that it now strikes a balance between respect for an individual's rights and our ability to do our job properly. If the draft code had been approved I would have moved to making *Blue Peter*."

The public interest can now over-ride an individual's right to protection from secret filming if the programme-makers are trying to expose or detect a crime or disreputable behaviour, if they are protecting public health and safety, exposing misleading claims or disclosing incompetence in public office.

● *Code on Fairness and Privacy: Broadcasting Standards Commission, 7 The Sanctuary, London SW1P 3JS.*

— Paul McCann
Media Correspondent



First draft: A detail from a sketch used by sculptor Henry Moore as he worked on *Internal/External Forms*. It could fetch £25,000 at Phillips today

Minister defends food agency retreat

The Government White Paper on the Food Standards Agency, the independent watchdog for safe and healthy eating, has been delayed until the New Year, the Prime Minister's office revealed yesterday.

Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, looks at the Government's climbdown.

ter from Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio.

Mr Mandelson's intervention is said to have echoed strong lobbying from vested interests in the powerful food industry, who oppose the agency controlling questions of nutrition.

Scientists state that poor diet is a big contributor to cancer, heart disease and diabetes and the agency needs power to advise public and ministers on the nutritional quality of diet.

Denying any question of difficulty, a spokesman for the Prime Minister's office said he was not aware that a date had been set for publication of the White Paper, although the Ministry of Agriculture issued a press notice at the end of August saying that it was expected in the autumn.

Whitehall officials went further in recent discussion with the Transport and General Workers' Union, which has planned to issue a detailed report, *Food Safety: an agenda for action*, this week.

The union - which has 200,000 members working in the food industry - was told that as the White Paper was to be published this week it would be better if they brought forward their launch to last week, which they did at very short notice.

That report reiterated the advice of Professor Philip James, the food scientist who was commissioned by Tony Blair to make

recommendations on the powers and scope of the agency. It said: "FSA's remit should cover every stage of the food chain, from plough to plate, including issues of nutrition."

There was no dispute over that question yesterday, and the No 10 spokesman said there was no question of any inter-departmental war. He insisted that what the Government wanted from the White Paper was clarity - which Jeff Rooker, Minister for Food Safety, duly delivered in an interview with BBC radio's *World at One*.

He said that while the agency would have "a substantial role in nutritional aspects", along with the Department of Health, it would not be telling people what to eat. "Its basic function," he added, "will be to ensure the safety of food production throughout the whole of the food chain."

That does not detract from the statement made by ministers to interest groups last month, when they said: "Ministers are convinced of the overwhelming arguments for FSA taking this major role in nutrition."

"Ministers expect to propose in the White Paper that FSA will be the principal source of advice on nutrition and of proposals for food policy in relation to nutrition; while health departments will continue to lead on public health policy and wider advice on lifestyle."

Early end to beef ban in jeopardy

Jack Cunningham, the Minister for Agriculture, flew to Brussels last night for urgent talks with the European Commission after EU veterinary inspectors raised obstacles to an early ending of the ban on British beef.

In an unpublished report to the consumer affairs commissioner, Emma Bonino, they raise doubts about the safety of controls in Northern Ireland, where the incidence of mad cow disease is extremely low and where cattle tracing systems have been in place for eight years.

The findings, which were passed on to the Government at the weekend, make it all the more unlikely that a majority of EU governments would back even a partial lifting of the embargo for cattle which can be certified free of BSE.

This comes as a severe blow to Ulster's farmers, whose export dependent industry has been decimated by the beef ban and who had been optimistic that at least some meat would be back on Continental shelves by Christmas.

Under a government proposal to ease the ban on meat from BSE-free herds Northern Ireland had hoped to benefit first because of the low incidence of BSE in the province but crucially because the move-

ments of cows between herds can be reliably traced thanks to a unique data base which will only be replicated in the rest of the UK by next March.

But following visits to Ulster two weeks ago the inspectors have said they are not fully satisfied with the cattle registration system. In talks with Ms Bonino last night, Mr Cunningham sought clarification on whether the Commission will now be requiring further changes on the ground before it can recommend a resumption of exports.

According to Brussels officials the doubts raised by the inspectors centre on the failure of the Northern Ireland authorities to apply the cattle database scheme fully to animals designated for the home market.

She and the farm commissioner Franz Fischler must now decide whether to demand tighter controls from Ulster before a meeting of the powerful EU standing veterinary committee which meets next Tuesday and Wednesday.

The committee is due to issue its recommendation on the certified herds scheme. Checking on the implementation of controls will slow down the decision even in the unlikely event that enough governments were prepared to back a partial relaxation of the ban.

— Katherine Butler, Brussels



Jason was eight when his parents were tragically killed in a car accident. His sisters were six and two. Coming to terms with the devastating loss of your parents is hard enough for anyone. But imagine having to deal with this terrible grief, at the same time as the prospect of being separated from your brother and sister.

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BBC pays up in rights case

The BBC has had to pay £500,000 compensation to an independent production company for trying to deprive it of its share of overseas rights for the detective series *Daniel & Wai*. The Corporation paid the money to Portobello Pictures on Friday night, just days before it was due to go to court and defend a charge of breach of contract and misrepresentation.

Portobello Pictures, co-producer, took the series to the BBC and claimed it was due a share of the money paid to the Corporation for the programme by the American cable channel A&E Network. Portobello's managing director Eric Abrahams said: "It is a matter of great regret that a publicly-funded body like the BBC should waste hundreds of thousands of pounds in legal fees alone trying to evade its contractual obligations."

The BBC maintains that the co-production contract contained 'highly unusual clauses' and that the final settlement was lower than Portobello's original claim.

— Paul McCann

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5/HEALTH NEWS

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY
25 NOVEMBER 1997

American studies confirm that sperm counts have halved over past 50 years

Sperm counts are falling faster than has been thought, according to the latest US surveys. Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor, examines whether modern living is to blame for declining male fertility.

American researchers who set out to dispel fears of falling sperm counts said yesterday that they had found to their dismay that sperm counts are even lower than had been reported.

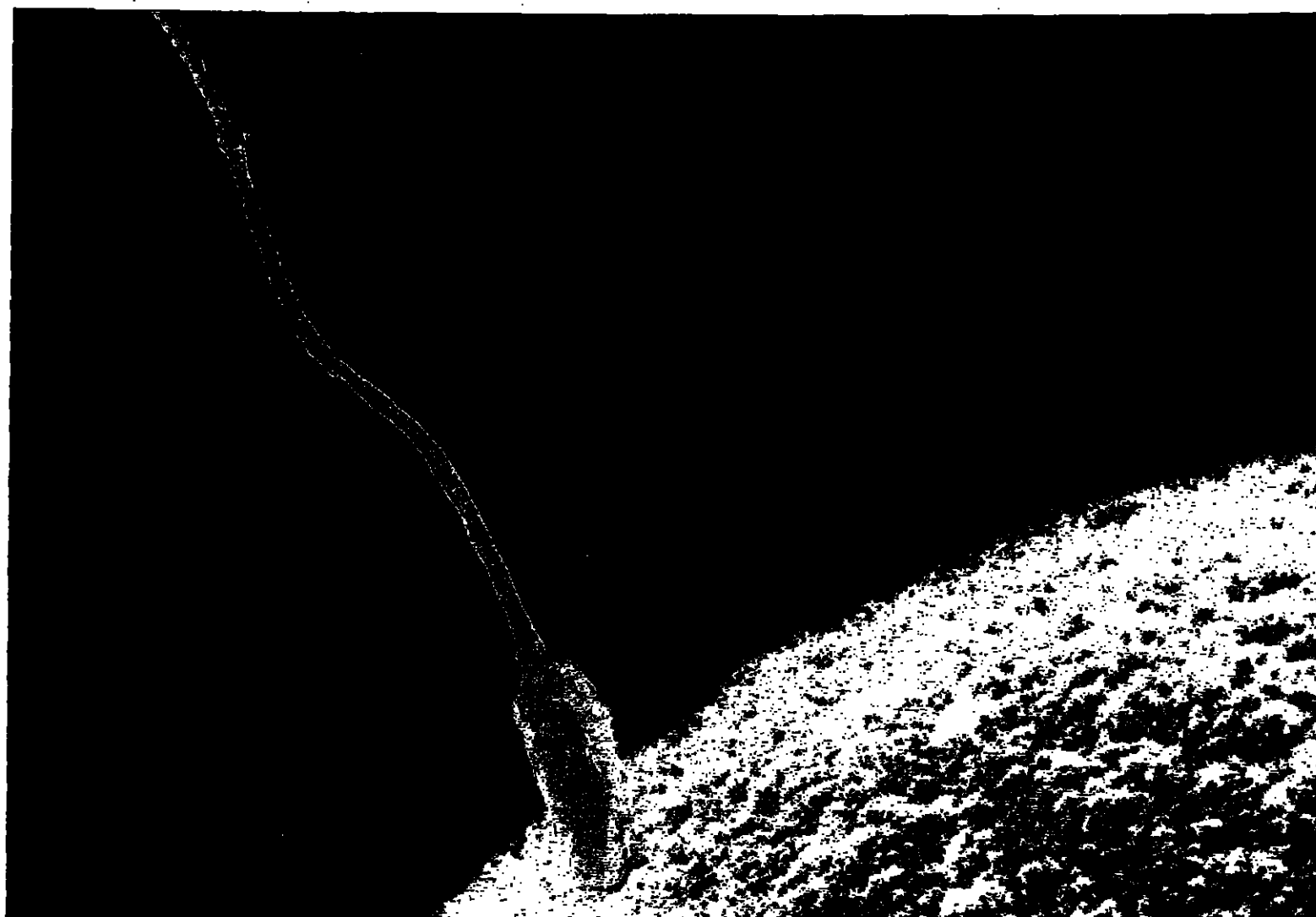
Two reviews, by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Institutes of Health, have confirmed earlier findings showing that average sperm counts have almost halved over the past 50 years.

Shanna Swan, chief of the reproductive epidemiology section at the California Department of Health Services, who carried out the review for the National Academy of Sciences said: "I think this study will change the debate about sperm decline from 'if' to 'why'."

The academy asked Dr Swan to write the definitive report on the issue, which has been bubbling since 1992 when Niels Skakkebaek and colleagues at Copenhagen University reported that sperm counts were falling around the world.

Their announcement caused a flurry of debate, and studies published since have shown conflicting results. British research found that men born in the 1970s had 25 per cent fewer sperm than those born in the 1950s, while a US study found men in New York had high sperm counts, with no evidence of a decline.

Some experts have questioned the accuracy of sperm counts. British researchers who



Dying breed: a human sperm penetrating an egg during fertilisation

Photograph: Science Photo Library

sent the same samples to different hospital laboratories found counts varied widely, with some rated infertile. They said that counts made 30 or 40 years ago are likely to have been still less accurate.

Dr Swan's group re-analysed the 61 published studies on sperm count that the Copenhagen team originally used. She said she had expected to contradict their finding

which she had found "frankly suspicious because of its simplicity". But, after careful analysis, she changed her mind.

"Overall, in Europe and the United States there is a strong and significant decline," she said. She has since started her own analysis of sperm counts from 1938 to 1996 and the early results show the same downward trend. "I have done enough work to be sure of

that," she said.

The National Institutes of Health review found sperm counts in the United States declined annually by an average of 1.5 million sperm per millilitre, or about 1.5 per cent per year between 1938 and 1990. Those in European countries declined at about twice that rate (3.1 per cent per year).

Environmental pollution is the most likely cause of the

decline. Dr Swan said: "Once we rule out differences such as smoking, temperature, age and ethnicity, what we will have left are environmental factors."

Most experts blame industrial chemicals, including the pesticide DDT and those used in making plastics, which mimic the hormone oestrogen in their effect on the body, either bringing out feminine characteristics or counteracting male

hormones. They are found in soil, water and food, and are long lasting.

Dr Swan said fertility was not the big issue, as babies were still being born. "However, sperm count is a marker, a red flag, for testicular cancer. We would expect wide-ranging effects. You cannot affect something like the reproductive system without affecting other systems in the body."

Cervical cancer laboratories deal with too few smears

One in five cervical cancer screening laboratories deals with too few smears to ensure accuracy, Jeremy Laurance reveals that Government guidelines on the minimum size of labs are being ignored, putting women at risk.

Women whose cervical smears are processed in small laboratories are at greater risk of having the early signs of cancer missed because the screeners who check their smears have too little experience.

Official figures show that 33 out of the 181 laboratories in England are still screening fewer than 15,000 smears a year, 18 months after the health department announced this was the minimum number necessary to ensure screeners had sufficient expertise to detect abnormalities.

Last week Warwickshire health authority announced it was re-examining the smears of 18,000 women after checks showed some that were abnormal had been missed. The mistakes have been blamed on the inexperience of the screeners at the laboratory at St Cross Hospital, Rugby which was processing fewer than 7,000 smears a year. The errors are the latest in a series of scandals that have rocked the cervical cancer screening programme. Earlier this month Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, announced a national review of the breast and cervical screening programmes following disasters at the Exeter breast screening centre and at the Kent and Canterbury hospital cervical screening laboratory.

The 15,000 minimum number of smears for each laboratory was set in guidelines issued in March 1996 by Sir Kenneth

Calman, the Chief Medical Officer. This re-iterated advice originally issued by the medical royal colleges, backed by a Government circular, in 1988. Health authorities were expected to exercise their financial muscle in the NHS internal market to achieve change.

Despite these instructions, the lab at the St Cross Hospital, Rugby, is the only one processing fewer than 15,000 smears a year that has since closed. Of the 34 small labs operating at March 1996, 33 are still in operation today.

Julietta Patnick, co-ordinator of the national service, said: "The St Cross lab was too small. They just weren't spotting the abnormalities."

She said proposals to shut smaller labs and transfer their work to larger ones had run into opposition from groups who wanted to keep the work done locally. But no matter how good the screeners a small lab did not see a sufficient number of abnormal smears. "With small labs there is always a question about their casemix and their viability in terms of staffing and training."

The national review announced by Mr Dobson requires all health authorities and trusts to draw up an action programme by next February to ensure all screening programmes meet national standards. Ms Patnick said that despite the problems the screening service was saving lives and it was essential women did not lose faith in it. "We can't excuse what has gone on but the mortality and incidence are dropping like stones. The programme is working well but it could be better."

Cases of invasive cancer have fallen from 16 to 11.2 per 100,000 since 1979, exceeding the target of 12.8 to be achieved by 2000 set under the Health of the Nation strategy. The death rate has declined from 7 to 4.1 per 100,000 since 1979.

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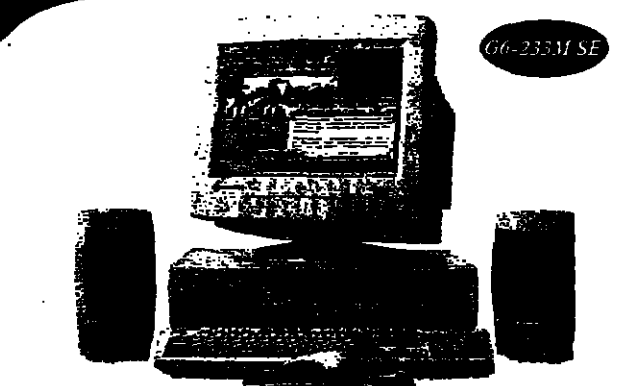
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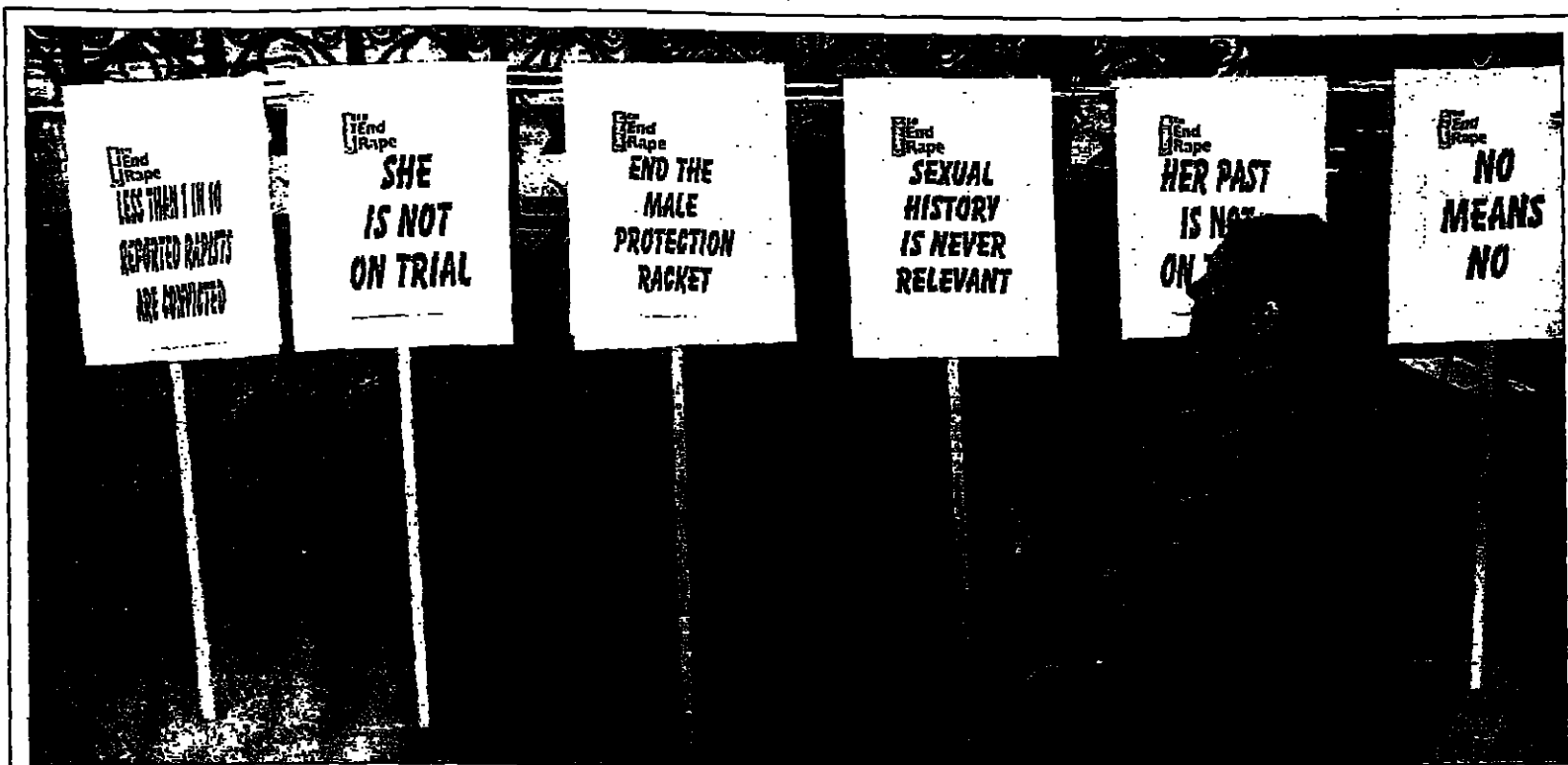


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Liz Kelly from the Campaign To End Rape at the Court of Appeal in London yesterday as Owen Oyston, the tycoon jailed for six years last May for raping a 16-year-old former model, began an attempt to clear his name. The hearing is expected to finish today. Photograph: Ben Curtis/PA

A Labour betrayal of desperate people

Ministers have summoned leaders from a London borough after a highly critical report said it was failing to provide care for its most vulnerable people. Glenda Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent, reports on 'continuing problems' for Barking and Dagenham Council.

Inconsistent assessment of needs, poorly planned care and limited services have led to a "very worrying" situation in Barking and Dagenham where the needs of vulnerable people are not being met.

One in four people rate the services as poor - twice as many as any other social services department that has been reviewed so far by the Audit Commission and the Social Services Inspectorate.

Unfair and inconsistent assessments have led to cases such as that of the non-English speaking man who spent 12 years in a residential home where no one spoke his language or the severely disabled woman who was not assessed for more than two years.

The situation has been blamed on an out-of-date assessment system and poorly targeted resources in the east London borough. Barking and Dagenham is among the most deprived 5 per cent of authorities in England and spends £36.9m on social services - 2 per cent of the council's overall budget.

It is not the first time the borough has come under fire. In 1993, health inspectors attempted to sort out Barking and Dagenham because it was having difficulties implementing the new community care legislation. "This report reflects continuing problems in the borough," said Sir Herbert Laming, chief inspector of the Social Services Inspectorate. "They may have made progress since 1993 but not sufficient progress."

"Barking and Dagenham council has failed to tackle fundamental management questions and therefore offers poor social services to the vulnerable people who depend on them."

One in four people who requested help from the council said that they had to wait two weeks or more before someone contacted them - this com-

pared to only 14 per cent in other social service reviews.

Elderly people were particularly badly served, and five out of the authority's eight old people's homes did not meet the registration requirements of other providers.

"Overall, while many people in Barking and Dagenham receive services, they are so thinly spread that the quality is poor," said Andrew Foster, controller of the Audit Commission. "The authority tries to provide services for all, but it is simply not geared to deliver them."

The report recommended that the council must improve the way it decides priorities and manages resources by targeting funds better. Partnerships should be extended with voluntary organisations and management problems must be addressed.

Health minister Paul Boateng said yesterday: "Because of the seriousness of the concerns, I have asked to meet with key members and officers of the council... I will however expect them to demonstrate to me that they will be able to prepare and implement an action plan to improve on the failings exposed in the report."

Barking and Dagenham Council said yesterday that it accepted the recommendations of the report and a full action plan would be developed within the next three months.

This is the 11th review of its kind and is part of a rolling programme of reviews of social services departments in England and Wales. Last month, Sefton social services in Merseyside came under attack for failing to meet its statutory responsibilities for providing care for older people and children.

SHORTFALLS OF THE SYSTEM

- An elderly Indian man who speaks no English was placed in a residential home for 12 years where no one spoke his language.
- It took two and a half years for a middle-aged severely disabled woman to be fully assessed.
- An elderly man needing placement in a Jewish home had to wait four months in a hospital bed for placement because the budget for non-borough homes is so restricted although beds were available.
- A young person with a learning disability living with parents is putting the mother under a great deal of stress. However, they have been told that the critical psychological support to deal with the behaviour is not available for six months.
- Mr B who suffers from multiple sclerosis will "sit in agony for hours rather than call anyone" because he was given no information about a carer's group, did not know who to contact about their home care, and considered it too risky to complain.

Life for car park menace

A teenager received two life sentences yesterday after a judge described him as a danger to the public. Leeds Crown Court heard how 18-year-old Robert Devonshire dropped a lump of concrete on to a 64-year-old man from the top of a multi-storey car park just three months after being released from a young offenders' institution for an identical attack.

Devonshire was sentenced to four years in September 1995 for dropping a 13-pound scaffolding pole onto eight-year-old Simon Teece from the top of the car park at the Ridings Shopping Centre in Wakefield. Devonshire was released on 15 November 1996. On 24 February this year, he went back to the same car park and dropped a three-pound lump of concrete which hit and slightly injured safety officer Bernard Atkinson.

Judge Brian Walsh said: "I am satisfied that you are a dangerous young man. Doctors have described you as... too switched off and remote to be recognised as treatable."

Workload 'led to RSI'

Bank staff developed problems with their upper limbs when their workload was increased "substantially", a court was told yesterday.

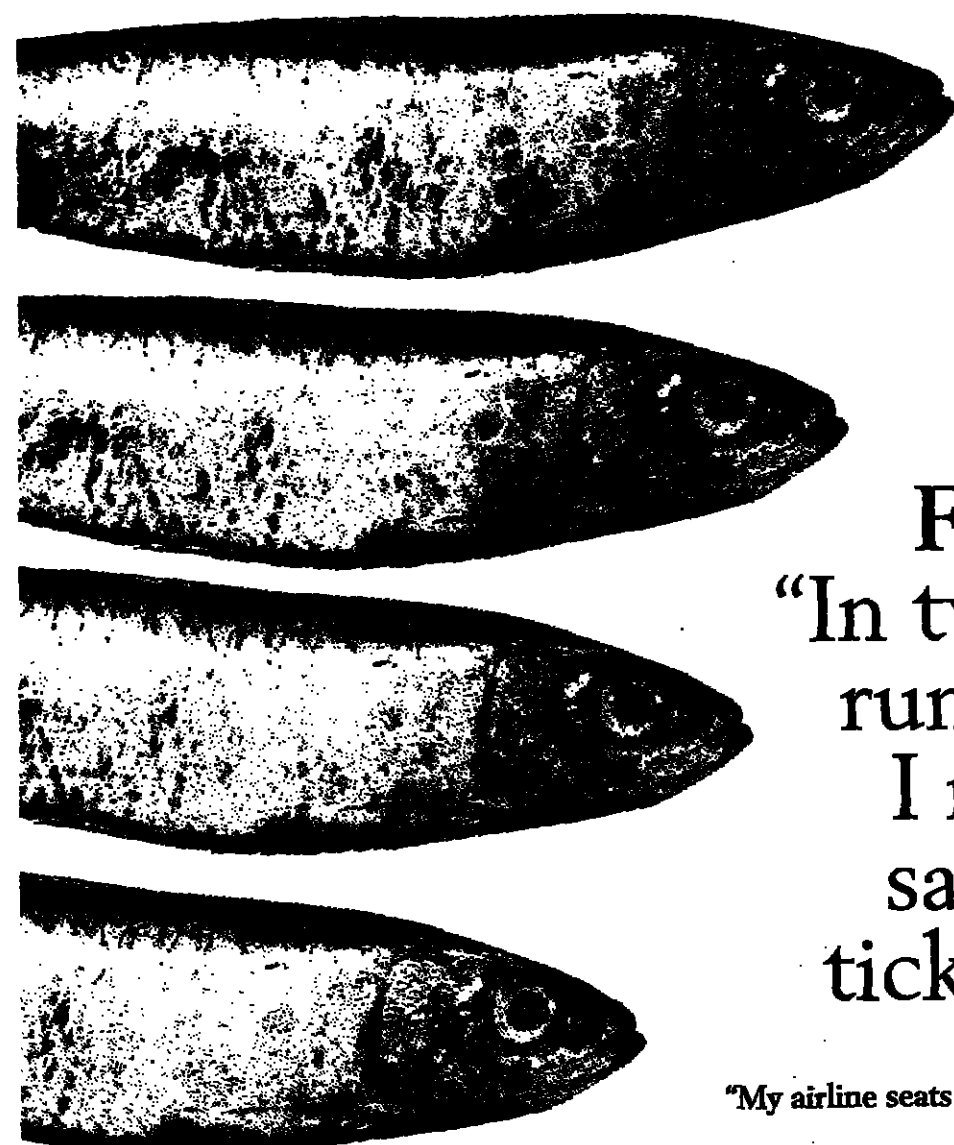
Five former workers at the Midland Bank's processing centre in Frimley, Surrey, are claiming compensation after suffering repetitive strain injuries. The test case, which opened at Southwark Crown Court in London yesterday, is expected to last a month.

John Foy, acting for the five women, told the court that the part-timers worked intensively on keyboards, keying information from cheques into computers. Mr Foy said the staff had to work on inadequately designed equipment and with poor working posture. There was a lack of training on posture and good working practices and the management was "oblivious" to this, he said.

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7/LEGAL NEWS

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY
25 NOVEMBER 1997
7

Straw 'acting unlawfully' over Hindley

A senior retired judge criticised the Home Secretary over his decision to keep Myra Hindley behind bars. Meanwhile, Jack Straw revealed plans to equalise sentencing across the country.

Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, looks at the debate over sentencing policy.

Mr Straw yesterday announced plans to set up a panel to advise the Court of Appeal on guidelines to ensure that sentencing by courts around the country is consistent. At the same time, he came under fire from backbenchers and a retired Appeal Court judge over his decision to keep Hindley in jail for the rest of her life.

The Home Secretary told the Commons that the Government is committed to introducing "greater consistency" in sentencing from courts through provisions in the Crime and Disorder Bill, to be published next month.

Under his proposals, the Court of Appeal would be required to formulate rules on how lower courts across Britain sentence those convicted of criminal offences. Although this already happens in certain offences, such as rape, the idea is to extend this to other areas. The Home Office believes that the current *ad hoc* arrangements lead to levels of sentencing which vary according to where a person is convicted, which undermines confidence in the judicial system.

Alan Beith, for the Liberal Democrats, welcomed the announcement on sentencing. But he added: "Sentencing policy is

only as effective as the prison and probation to which it directs - and an overpressed prison service cannot work miracles."

Meanwhile, a former Appeal Court judge last night criticised Mr Straw's ruling that the moors murderer, Myra Hindley, should never be released.

Sir Frederick Lawton, in an interview with BBC TV's *Panorama*, described Mr Straw's decision as both unreasonable and unlawful. If the decision had been left to judges, Hindley would probably be free, he added.

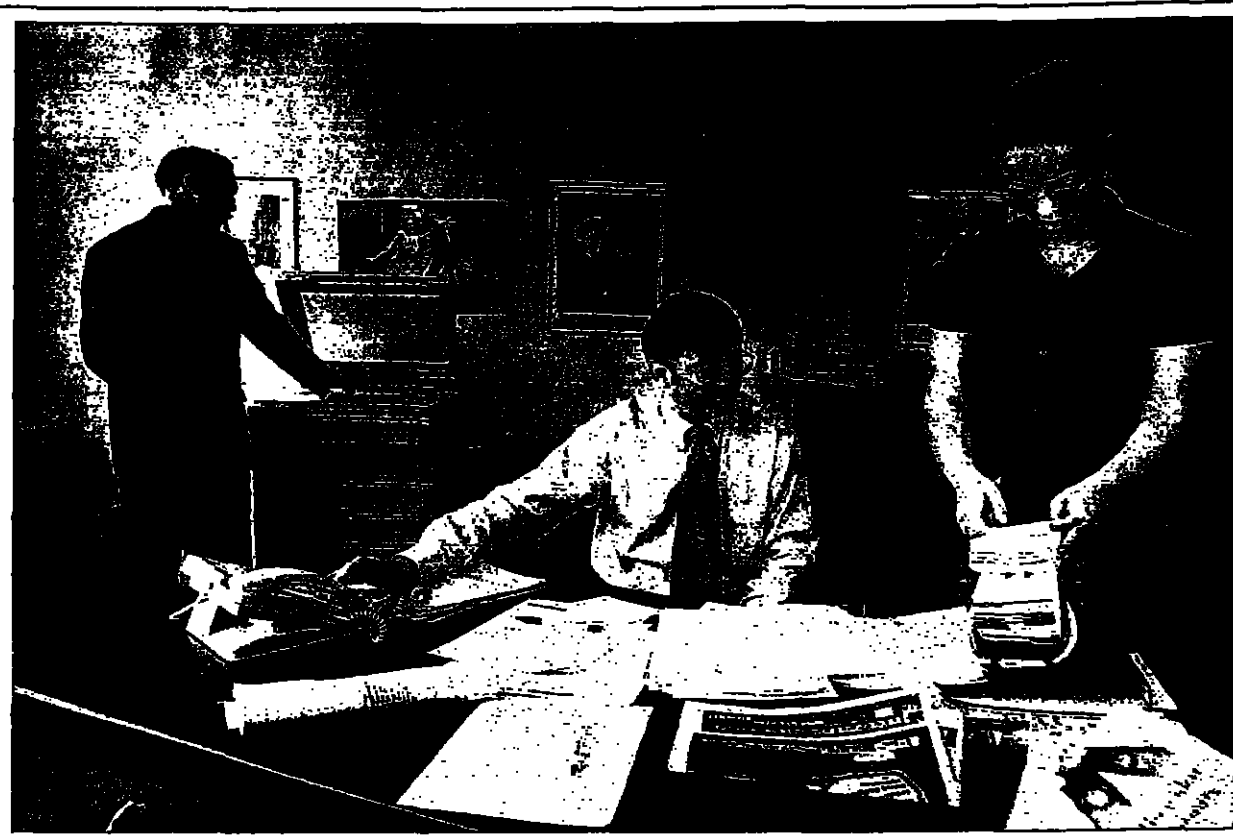
Sir Frederick added: "Where a public official exercising statutory powers acts unreasonably, he acts unlawfully." The Home Secretary should keep an "open mind" over what the future situation may be.

Hindley's lawyers are due to challenge the increase in her sentence in the High Court. Last week, Mr Straw reaffirmed the decision that she should die in jail which was taken by his predecessor, Michael Howard.

A Labour backbencher yesterday challenged the Home Secretary to justify why he had decided Hindley should spend the rest of her life behind bars when other prisoners guilty of "heinous, revolting and repulsive crimes" were released.

Mr Straw told Gordon Prentice, MP for Pendle, that any individual resident in the UK had rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. Convention.

Hindley is pressing ahead with her challenge next month to Mr Howard's ruling that her minimum sentence, or tariff, should be raised from 30 years to whole life. However, even if her application for judicial review succeeds in the High Court, Mr Straw will still retain the final say on whether she should be released.



Legal offices: A barrister (left) and clerks working in the Acre Lane Neighbourhood Chambers Photograph: Rui Xavier

Long arm of law stretches to pastures new

A group of London barristers has moved from the Temple to set up practice in Brixton, forming the first self-styled neighbourhood chambers in the country. Michael Streeter looks at the changing face of the Bar.

The Acre Lane Neighbourhood Chambers are just 15 minutes away from the traditional, cloistered environs of London barristers, but, on a superficial glance at least, seem to inhabit a different world.

A radical team of six lawyers has set up work in open plan offices above a wine bar in one of the capital's most culturally diverse streets in the heart of Brixton.

The idea of the new chambers is to fuse the high professional standards of the Bar with the openness and easy access of a community practice. If successful, it could be the start of a mini-revolution across the country in the way that barristers arrange their work, and could help change their stuffy public image.

Neelam Sultan, one of the founding members of the new chambers, said that the public tended to see barristers as remote. "People's perception of doctors is far more sympathetic," she said.

"By being in the community we are making a statement, we are saying 'You do not have to be in the Temple or have to have a certain image to be a barrister.'" At the same time, the practice, which will combine its advocacy role with campaigning on key issues, wants to ensure that its standards match the rest of the Bar.

The barristers chose Brixton, in south London, because Ms Sultan had already worked and lived in the area, and not for any reason based on the area's old reputation as a trouble spot. "Brixton is not all about guns and robberies, far from it... We think Brixton is a really representative example of an urban locality," she said.

In the two months since the barristers opened for business, the reaction from people locally, both inside and outside the legal profession, has been mostly positive. "It can only be a benefit for them to have

such a service on their doorstep," said Ms Sultan. Some fellow barristers might feel they were being "foolhardy" but the general reaction among colleagues had been supportive.

There are signs that the concept of a neighbourhood chambers could be catching on. The Bar Council has just launched a pilot scheme where 18 sets of chambers around the country will work closely with local advice agencies such as Shelter and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The Government, too, as part of its reform of civil justice, has proposed a Community Legal Service, though critics doubt whether, with no new money available, this idea will come to much.

The prominent barrister Michael Mansfield QC, patron of the new chambers, said he believed the new practice would lead to similar ventures: "I hope this will show the way for others."

Ms Sultan says she looks forward to that day. "I would like to think that one day it will be quite commonplace to have a practice in Brixton. That it would be seen as quite logical and acceptable."

Hunger strike to go nationwide

Dozens of prisoners will go on a co-ordinated national hunger strike around Britain later this week. They are unhappy with the progress of the Criminal Cases Review Commission which was set up to address miscarriages of justice. Ian Burrell reports.

Winston Silcott never has liked prison food. But his reasons for refusing the offerings of the canteen at HMP Maidstone this week have nothing to do with the quality of the cuisine.

Like Michael Davis of the M25 Three gang, who will be leaving his tray untouched at Swaleside jail on the Isle of Sheppey and the convicted killer Susan May who will be deliberately going without food in Durham prison's female wing, Silcott will be taking part in the first national hunger strike by British prisoners.

More than 60 inmates at 21 prisons are to participate in the action from Thursday, all of them claiming to be victims of injustice.

The protest will pitch the CCRC against a national movement called Action Against Injustice, which believes the government-appointed body is already failing in its task. Supporters of the prisoners will join the hunger strike outside the commission's Birmingham headquarters. The hunger strikers have been told to stop fasting after Saturday.

Chris Moore, of Action against Injustice, said: "If the CCRC carries on like this it is going to take until the next millennium just to deal with the cases already sent in."

He said the composition of the CCRC made it biased against convicted prisoners. "It is headed by a mason. It is a non-elected body and it is heavily biased with people with prosecution experience," he said.

Nearly eight months after becoming operational, the CCRC has been sent details of 959 alleged miscarriages. Five have so far been referred to the court of appeal.

One was the case of James Hanratty, who was hung 35 years ago for the so-called A6 murder. Also referred for appeal were the case of convicted Hyde Park bomber Danny McNamee, the conviction of a burglar who served five years in the 1960s, and Mahmood Mat-tan, who was hanged for murder in 1952.

Meanwhile new cases come in at the rate of five a day.

Sources at the CCRC said that the commission was satisfied with its progress. "We always knew that there were going to be a very busy first couple of years," said one.

Meanwhile, Silcott awaits a decision from the CCRC on his life sentence for the murder of boxer Anthony Smith in 1984.

Having been acquitted on appeal of the murder of PC Colin Blakelock, who died in the Broadwater Farm riot in 1985, he maintains that he stabbed Smith in self-defence.

His brother, George, said: "If Winston Silcott was not wrongly convicted for the murder of PC Blakelock, he would not still be in prison today. Most people would not have even heard of him."

Earlier this year the CCRC indicated that it was unlikely to refer the case further but Silcott's lawyers have made another submission which is under consideration.

Also fasting will be two members of the M25 Three - Davis and Raphael Rowe - who were convicted of carrying out the murder of a hairdresser and a series of other attacks around the motorway. The pair claim they were denied the right to a fair trial.

Susan May, 52, has always denied she murdered her wealthy aunt, Hilda Marchbank in 1992. Her application for a re-trial was rejected.

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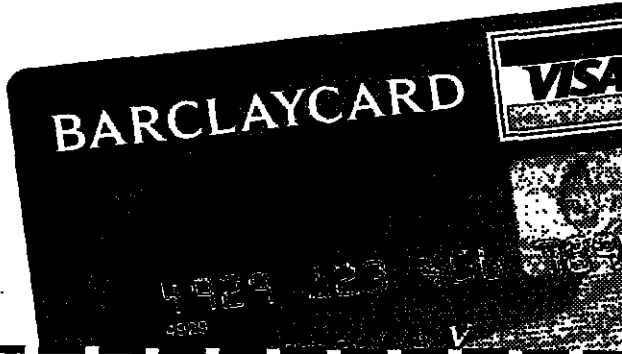
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Ticket agency aims to beat touts

A campaign to stop ticket touts ripping off the-atregoers and sports fans was launched yesterday. Entertainment industry chiefs said too many customers could pay up to £300 for a ticket, sometimes with only a restricted view of the ballet, opera, pop concert or sporting event.

Agents and venues who sign up to become members of the Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers, STAR, will guarantee to set out the face value, booking fees, and any conditions attached to tickets when they sell them.

Organisers said customers buying their tickets from a STAR member would be able to purchase with confidence.

The scheme is being backed by a cross-section of the entertainment and sports industries, including the Football Association, All-England Lawn Tennis Club, London theatres and concert promoters.

Anthony Sell, chief executive of the British Tourist Authority and chairman of STAR, said too many visitors felt let down by ticket agents. The BTA would promote STAR members abroad as a reliable source of tickets, he added.



Making money: Ticket touts at work before a sports event at Twickenham. Photograph: Jonathan Weaver

MI6 agent faces jail for leaking secrets

An MI6 officer yesterday admitted he had unlawfully disclosed secrets about the security agency. But, says Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent, the agent insists that nothing he revealed put officers at risk or damaged national security.

Richard Tomlinson faces up to two years in jail after he became the first MI6 agent to be successfully prosecuted under official secrets legislation for 36 years.

Mr Tomlinson, 34, admitted that last year he had sent a seven-page synopsis to a publish-

er in Australia outlining the first seven chapters of a proposed book about his experiences in the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). Mr Tomlinson joined MI6 in 1991 and was dismissed in 1995.

Analysis by MI6 staff showed the synopsis disclosed details of the "training, operations, sources and methods" of SIS, Bow Street magistrates' court in London was told.

But in a statement, Mr Tomlinson, who remains in police custody, argued that he had become a victim of the "draconian" Section 1 of the Official Secrets Act 1989 which prevents the disclosure of any information about MI6 by employees. The former agent argued that nothing he intended to publish would have put anyone at risk.

He said: "I wanted to plead not guilty to expose this hypocrisy, but the draconian nature of the Official Secrets Act makes this impossible - there is no public interest defence. I would have been guilty even if I had disclosed the colour of the carpets in the office."

Colin Gibbs, for the prosecution, argued that the infor-

mation in the proposed book would have been damaging to the national interest.

Mr Gibbs said that during his time with the service he was active operationally and had access to a wide range of sensitive information. He is understood to have worked in Moscow, Bosnia, and the Middle East.

When he was dismissed from the service in August 1995, he said he no longer felt bound by the Official Secrets Act and that he had no moral obligation to SIS because of the "disgraceful" manner of his dismissal, the court was told.

Earlier this year Tomlinson signed an agreement to terminate a claim for unfair dismissal and to return the information in his possession in exchange for financial support.

However, last spring he went to Australia to discuss publication of his book. Mr Tomlinson returned to Britain and was arrested last month.

The case was committed for sentencing at the Old Bailey. He is the first MI6 agent to be prosecuted under official secrets legislation since the Soviet spy George Blake, 36 years ago.

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DAILY POEM

Pearl At 4am

By Barry MacSweeney

Moon afloat, drunken opal sluggy boat
in an ocean of planets and stars.
Fierce clouds gather over me
like a plaid shawl.
Gone, gone, click of quarter irons
to Nenehead, Alston and beyond.
I moved my mouth in the darkness of the kitchen,
spittle poured wrongfully into the pan fat.
Snow once more
in my broken face, reduced
to licking the swollen door post. Just a gargyle.
Death upon us like a stalking foot-soldier, high
and mighty on the law, bayonet
fixed. A sudden glint there, and that's it.
Sputtering lord
and strange sparks
ignite my mind, for I am in love
with something I do not know.
It is the brusque wind,
the nearest falling tumblestones
dislodged by the spate, the finest
snowdrops under heaven.

This final selection from the five poets who have won the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Awards for Artists comes from Barry MacSweeney's *The Book of Demons* (Bloodaxe, £7.95). In addition to poems inspired by the poet's fight against alcohol addiction, the book reprints MacSweeney's "Pearl" sequence, first published by Equippage (Cambridge) in 1995.

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9/MILLENNIUM

Church hits
the road to
show spirit of
Millennium

Should the Millennium be an excuse for a party or a time for spiritual renewal? The Church of England is putting on a road show to encourage us to remember the 'reason for the season'. Clare Gomer found out last night that the message may already have got across - to the Government.

It was as if their prayers had been answered. No sooner had a Christian Millennium road show been unveiled at the General Synod, stressing the need for a spiritual message in the 2000 celebrations, than He said it would be so.

Peter Mandelson, that is. The minister without portfolio delighted the Church by telling Parliament that the New Millennium Experience Company had been told "to focus on spiritual renewal".

In a written reply to the House of Commons, Mr Mandelson said there would also be an emphasis on the "major role Christianity has played in shaping this country and the rest of the world over the past 2,000 years".

Furthermore, the experience would "reflect the multi-faith nature of modern British society" and the Millennium company was liaising with church groups and others from all faiths.

His words are likely to be welcomed by the Church of England and by the Roman Catholic Church.

Members of the clergy have been anxious for some time that spirituality could be overlooked in the razz-matazz that is likely to surround the Millennium celebrations.

Earlier in the day, a fringe meeting at the General Synod had been given a taste of the Millennium road show currently touring the country.

Churches Together in England, an ecumenical body, be-

lieves that the Millennium is a golden opportunity to spread the Word, but first they must alert people to the real "reason for the season".

The Rev Stephen Lynas, Archbishop's officer for the Millennium, said: "We have actually got to remind people that the Millennium belongs to us and that it means nothing without some reference to Jesus of Nazareth. It's so basic, but it needs to be done."

The New Start campaign is anxious to "capture the moment of the Millennium" in a way in which the Dome and a booze-up will not.

In order to do so, he hopes that Christians will give a candle to every household in England which will be lit at two minutes to midnight. Then, 30 seconds before midnight, people will read a "Millennium Affirmation", distributed by churches.

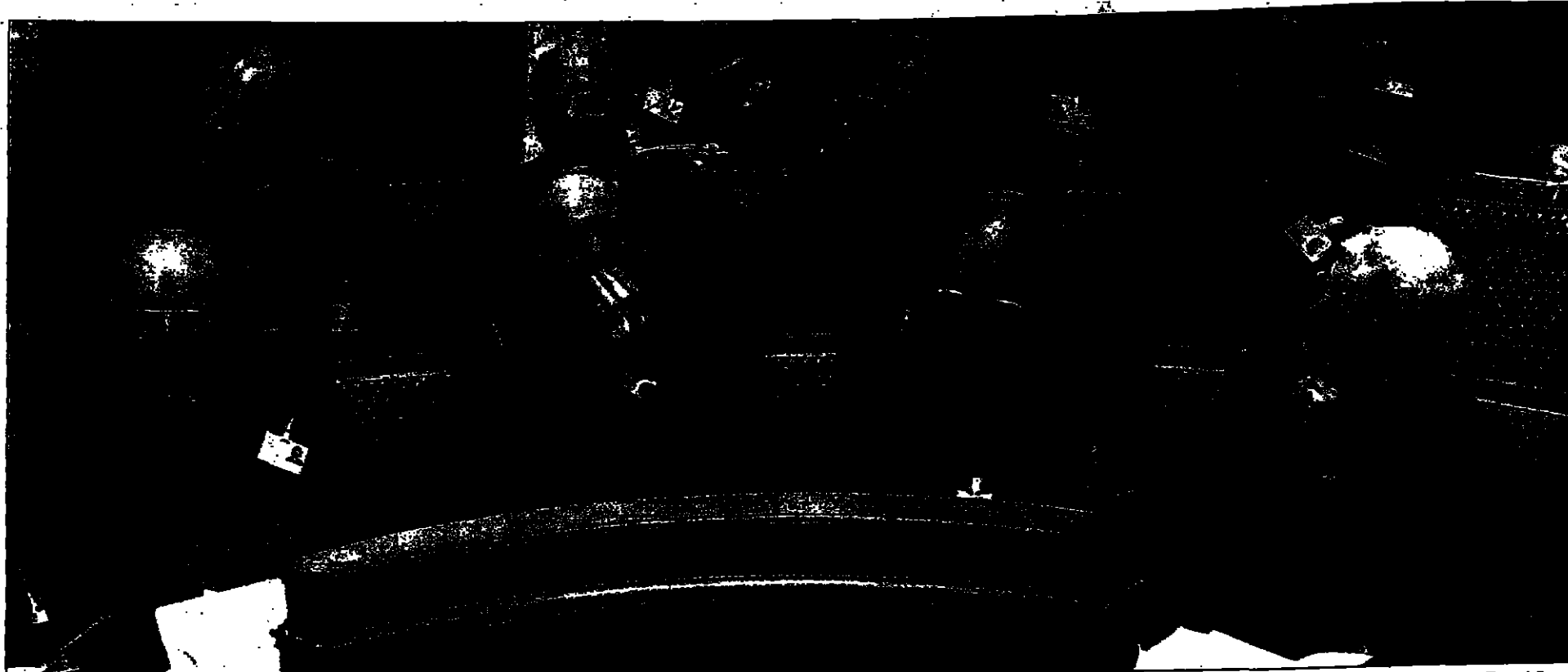
Although the words of the five-line affirmation are not finalised, Mr Lynas said they would be about "looking back at the past, with not only thanksgiving but regret, and grasping hold of the future and making something of it, rather than being a passive victim of time."

He said that the public's lighting of candles after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, convinced New Start that it was thinking along the right lines.

"The Diana effect demonstrated that people will do something spiritual and reflective which doesn't require them to sign a creed or use churchy language."

The Road Show has yet to visit Newcastle, Durham, Bristol, Peterborough and London, finishing on 11 December.

Among its speakers is the Rev Brian Hoare, Secretary for Evangelism of the Methodist Church, who describes the Millennium as "the culmination of all we've been about in the last decade of evangelism." He added: "We are unlikely to have a better opportunity for pastoral work, mission and evangelism in our lifetime."



Spiritual gathering: Bishops sitting for the opening session of the General Synod yesterday, where the Millennium road show was unveiled.

Photograph: David Rose

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Archer

Planners put the squeeze on cities

Squeezing more homes into urban areas could be the salvation of Britain's cities as well as protecting our countryside from further suburban sprawl. Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, says there is growing support for that message, but are the ministers listening?

A campaign was launched yesterday to talk up Britain's cities as places for successful, aspiring people to live, work and play.

The Local Government Association, which represents the town halls of England and Wales, wants to highlight urban vibrancy and excellent public transport – and step up the fight against crime, deprivation and squalor.

It has launched an Urban Commission, bringing together bodies as diverse as the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the English Tourist Board to lobby government.

A growing number of planners and developers believe the Government needs to make bold policy changes if it is to revive the cities, and the time has never been riper. New planning policies are needed to get more housing development on small, pocket sites and on derelict, ex-industrial land.

Many believe that at the same time, the availability of greenfield sites for housing in the countryside must be squeezed harder. That would make rural homes, and new houses built beyond the existing edge of towns and cities, more expensive. It will satisfy legions of rural dwellers who want no extra homes in their back field. But it will also make housebuilders search harder for development sites within towns and cities.

A group of urban development enthusiasts has been meeting regularly, with the aim of trying to shift government policy in favour of intensified urban development. They include leading councillors and planners, senior officials from the Government's land regeneration body, English Partnerships, and representatives of pro-urban house building firms.

They are building on a series of studies, commissioned from consultancies by cen-

tral and local government, into how more homes can be fitted into cities – enhancing their quality rather than overcrowding them. These studies cover the conversion of offices and vacant spaces above shops into flats, stepping up the remaking of houses into flats and maisonettes.

One study, done for the Government Office for London and the London Planning Advisory Committee by planning consultancy Llewellyn Davies, has examined how many new homes could be built in the capital using small, under-used or derelict sites such as temporary car parks – all within 800 metres of each of London's dozens of individual town centres. The idea is that each home would be less than 10 minutes walk from a station, several bus stops, a supermarket and a leisure facility. Householders could manage without a car, or with just one vehicle instead of two.

Based on intensive studies in a few boroughs, planners worked out how many new homes could be provided on such sites across the capital. If semi-detached homes with room for two cars were built, there would be room for 52,000. If each had just one parking space there could be 77,000. And if they were car-free developments, there could be 106,000. The higher density development would be at most three or four stories tall, and they would all have gardens.

Since most of the rapid growth in household numbers forecast over the next 20 years consists of single adults, there is a need to increase the number of flats.

"There is an opportunity for cities to reinvent themselves, curing car dependence and enhancing their qualities" said Patrick Clark, one of the authors of the report and an associate with Llewellyn Davies. "There is a heck of a lot of potential there."

He enthuses about car pooling schemes, where about six city dwellers share about one car between them as part of a larger collective. On the Continent thousands of people now belong to such schemes.

So far, however, the Government has been wary of moving to curb the supply of greenfield land for housing development. It is still considering what the balance should be between building inside and outside towns and cities in response to a forecast demand for 4.4 million new homes in England between 1991 and 2016.



Health hazard: Rats carry a number of dangerous parasites which can come into contact with humans via household pets

Rise of the rat blamed on water privatisation

Rats are breeding at an alarming rate and posing a hitherto unrecognised level of threat to human health. Kim Sengupta reports that local authorities are now considering legal action against privatised water authorities for allegedly neglecting infestation controls

Cost-cutting which came with privatisation of the water authorities has led to an explosion in number of rats and a signif-

icant rise in health risks to humans, according to pest-control experts.

New medical research has also discovered the rats carry more disease-causing parasites than previously realised, and many of these can be transmitted to people by household pets.

Nearly a million homes in England are suffering from rat infestation, and there has been a 40 per cent rise in the number of homes infested in the last two decades. Much of it is said to stem from decaying sewers and drains.

A number of local authorities are now considering mounting a test case against privatised water companies under

environmental and pest-control laws. It is claimed that while some of the companies have been making "fat-cat" payments to executives and directors, they have often drastically reduced funding for rat control.

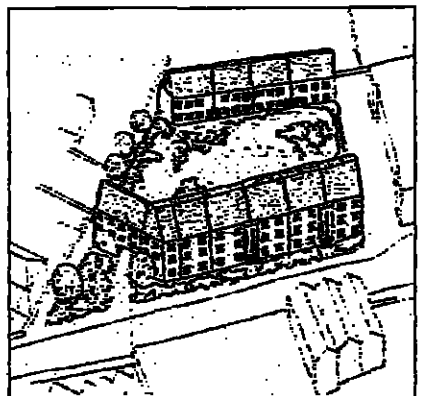
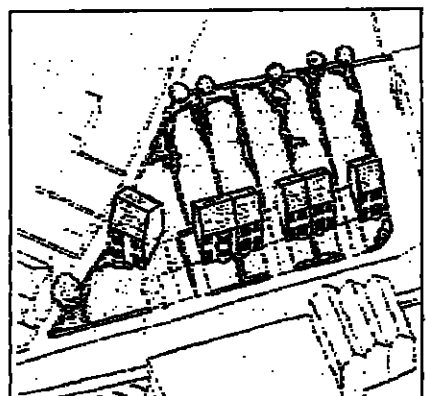
Yorkshire Water, which has around 15,000 miles of sewers, wants to end its contract with the pest-control department of the local councils. Instead it plans to offer the contract to private companies.

Pest-control officers believe this is a recipe for major problems in the future. David Bird, environmental services manager of Sheffield council, said: "We are exploring the possibility of legal action over this. We feel such action can be brought

under environmental and pest-control laws".

Yorkshire Water has denied that the move is a cost-cutting exercise, and said the company would strive to maintain and improve the quality of service. In 1995, the company reduced its sewer-baiting budget by one-third, although a small percentage of the money was later restored.

According to last night's Granada Television *World in Action* programme, the health risk is greater than previously recognised. Potentially fatal illnesses include Weil's disease, Q disease, toxoplasma, and hantavirus, which can cause liver and kidney failure.



Left: How a pocket site near the centre of Bromley, London, might be developed suburban-style, with six homes and 12 car parking spaces. Right: car-free housing – 32 homes and a communal garden on the same site. Source: Llewellyn Davies

Supermarkets have tough lesson for Dales folk

Say yes to plans for a supermarket development and get a new school. That is the proposal that has divided folk in a picturesque Dales town, as Jojo Moyes explains.

Opposing plans for two supermarket developments have split a market community in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales.

Schemes submitted by the Co-op and the supermarket chain Boots, would use a 10-acre field near the centre of Settle. In return, both are offering to build a much-needed primary school, which would

ease pressure on the existing school.

Tony Henry, chief executive of Yorkshire Coop Ltd, believes its planning application would be the least intrusive. "We've traded in the market square for about 130 years. Unfortunately we've got no means of providing any car parking, so we've got a plan to build a new shop adjacent to the square. Ours is to build a supermarket where the existing bowling club is, and move the bowling club to the field."

The Boots application would site the supermarket, and the primary school, directly on the field. The 10-acre site was given to the town years ago and is now owned by North Yorkshire County Council. It had

been earmarked for a school for years but resources meant that the council could never afford to build it.

But the plans have divided residents, with one protest group threatening to block any construction groups who attempt to take over the field.

Geoff Knights, a local businessman, says that the council cannot guarantee a school will actually be built. "It's the last greenfield site in Settle," he said yesterday. "All the children play on this playing field. It's a real community space – we even used it to raise enough money to pay for our swimming pool."

He said that the town centre had already

lost many of its traders, and that the vast majority of people in the town would continue to fight the supermarket chains, in order to ensure that it still thrived. If given the opportunity, he added, local businesses would buy it to safeguard its future.

But Ian Parker, head of Settle Primary School, says the existing Victorian building is overcrowded. The new site would provide a much needed nursery unit, as well as "more breathing space". Others say a larger supermarket would be welcome, citing a 16 mile drive to the nearest superstore.

Yesterday both schemes received a second refusal, but will await a planning inquiry set for April.

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Euro-sceptics join battle to save schilling

The Deutschmark and sterling might arguably be worth saving from extinction, but the schilling? Imre Karacs says a petition launched yesterday by Jörg Haider seeks a stay of execution for the Austrian currency.

Euro-sceptics from across the Continent are making a beeline for Vienna. Austrians are about to speak out on the subject said to be close to their hearts: the future of their currency. Nowhere in Europe have the people been consulted on Economic and Monetary Union.

All this week, Austrian voters will be able to sign petitions calling for a referendum on monetary union. If 100,000 signatures are collected by the weekend, they are in with a chance.

The petition has been organised by Mr Haider's Freedom Party, a force sworn to battle alien influences of every kind. Issues such as immigration and Euro-federalism have propelled the Freedom Party to within a whisker of the Social Democrats and conservatives, who are united in government only by their hatred for Mr Haider. At last year's European elections, the Freedom Party got 28 per cent of the vote.

Euro-scepticism has proved a rich seam even in Austria, and Mr Haider intends to mine it for all its worth. His drive to ditch Emu is only the most spectacular of his high-profile campaigns to put Austria first.

"We'd like monetary union to be postponed for three to five years, because we think it has been badly prepared," explains Mr Haider's deputy, Susanne

Riess-Passer. Like her German counterparts, Ms Riess-Passer denies she is totally opposed to the euro. "We are in favour of a currency union that is well-prepared," she says. "But not one country really fulfils the convergence criteria at the moment, and no one has found a way of dealing with Europe's 18 million unemployed."

The two parties in the government are euro-enthusiasts, she says, leaving the Freedom Party with no choice but to campaign outside parliament. It is a long shot. According to the Austrian constitution, parliament can – but does not have to – debate the matter if 100,000 signatures are collected.

If it does, the petition's call for a nationwide referendum is certain to be defeated by the governing majority. This is the outcome towards which the Freedom Party is manoeuvring. "The issue has to be discussed," Ms Riess-Passer says. "The government will not be able to ignore it if many people sign the petition."

But the government has every intention of ignoring it, thus serving up a moral victory for the Freedom Party. The additional danger for Euro-enthusiasts is that a massive turnout for the petition could make the call for a referendum irresistible.

It is unlikely, however, that large enough numbers will visit the town halls where the signatures are being gathered under official supervision. Surveys indicate that too few Austrians can be bothered about saving the Schilling.

According to the latest polls, the proportion of voters strongly opposed to Emu is around 13 per cent. Meanwhile, the proportion of Emu-enthusiasts has soared from 44 to 62 per cent since August.



Bad taste: Critics claim that Maxim's in Paris is suffering from declining standards, personified by the use of artificial flowers. Its owner, Pierre Cardin, has dismissed them as 'fat bellies' Photograph: Rex Features

Maxim's decline leaves Cardin with food for thought

It is a long time since Maxim's was at the cutting edge of French cuisine. The restaurant is no longer even mentioned in the Michelin guide. But it has always maintained a certain cachet, partly because of its splendid location, just off the Place de la Concorde, partly because of the political and show-business celebrities who enjoyed being seen there.

An uneasy food-fight has now broken out. On the one side, there is the owner of Maxim's, the couturier Pierre Cardin, who claims that he is starved of the credit he deserves for rescuing a Parisian landmark. On the opposite side, there are the restaurant critics, and many former clients of Maxim's, who protest that Cardin has permitted the old place to sink into astronomically priced mediocrity. Cardin, they allege, is chiefly interested in Maxim's as a trademark, which he can franchise around the world. (He is just about to open a 1,000-seat Maxim's in Shanghai).

The final blow, it would seem, to Maxim's reputation is the decision of the Club des Cent (the club of 100), an exclusive Parisian luncheon and dining club, to move its general assembly to another restaurant. Since as long as anyone can remember, the meeting has been held at Maxim's.

The members of the Club des Cent include the former Prime Minister, Pierre Messmer, the former foreign minister, Jean François-Poncet, the celebrated chef, Paul Bocuse, and, embarrassingly, Pierre Cardin himself. To join, you have to be a) famous, b) highly recommended by other members and c) pass a complicated gastronomic quiz. You might, for instance, according to the newspaper *Le Figaro*, be asked the following: "You

leave Paris at 9am to drive to Bordeaux. At which starred restaurant do you stop for lunch?"

A new question might be: "What is wrong with Maxim's?" The Gault Millau guide says: "The prices are as chilling as its ambience." Other critics complain that the food is poor and unadventurous and – final insult – the flowers on the tables are artificial.

To all this, Mr Cardin responded in an interview in *Le Figaro* yesterday that he was in the midst of a multi-million pound refit of Maxim's. The Club des Cent, he said, were "marvellous people" but "old people". "Maxim's is tomorrow



Pierre Cardin: Accused of neglecting standards

not yesterday. I don't just want fat bellies in my restaurant. People come here for one of the most beautiful settings in the world, not just to stuff themselves."

Asked what he had done for Maxim's, he went on to confirm his critics' worst suspicions. "The former owners, so-called professionals, did nothing with this name," he said. "I have created [Maxim's] cigars, spectacles, saucepans, mineral waters, chocolates, watches, truffles, champagne ..."

— John Lichfield, Paris

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France puts Muslim militants on trial for bombings that killed eight

Thirty-eight Muslim militants went on trial in Paris yesterday, accused of providing logistical support for a bombing wave in France in which eight people died and more than 170 were injured.

The 38 are accused of helping members in Belgium and France of one of Algeria's most ruthless Islamic rebel groups, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), blamed by police for a series of bomb attacks in France between July and November 1995.

The accused face jail terms of up to 10 years for charges ranging from criminal conspiracy in connection with a terrorist organisation and trafficking in arms and identity documents, to violations of immigration law. The proceedings began with shouts by some of the accused that they had no hopes of a fair trial. "We have already been condemned," some of them yelled.

Most of those on trial are French-born young men who are the children of immigrants of North African Arab origin. A few are Frenchmen of European origin who have converted to Islam. One of the accused is a 69-year-old woman of dual Franco-Algerian nationality whose son-in-law is also on trial. Prosecutors say she lent other defendants a portable telephone and the use of her flat.

The bombing wave began on 25 July 1995, with the rush-hour explosion of a gas canister packed with black powder, nails and bolts on a suburban commuter train at the St Michel station in the heart of the Paris Latin Quarter. Eight died and nearly 100 others were wounded in the blast, which was followed over the next three months by eight further attacks, two of which failed due to defective fuses.

The GIA said it staged the attacks, accusing France of backing the Algerian authorities in a war with Islamic rebels which began after Algiers cancelled the 1992 gen-



Passengers lying injured after the 1995 St Michel train bomb Photograph: Reuters

eral election, which fundamentalist Muslims were poised to win. At least 65,000 people have died in Algeria in the conflict.

Another four people were killed and dozens more injured in a further bombing on the same Paris train line in December 1996, but that attack was not included on the charge-sheet.

Few of the accused were in custody before the trial, and only 35 of the 38 accused were in the Paris criminal court for the first day of the proceedings. The other three charged individuals have never been found by police and are being tried *in absentia*.

The trial is the first to be held in connection with the 1995 bombings, although none of the defendants is accused of direct involvement in the attacks.

Prosecutors say the accused took orders from GIA leader Djamel Zitouni in Algeria. The say the ringleader of the French

support group is Ali Toucheat, alias Tarek, 30, who is still sought by police. His deputy, Saïf Bourada, 27, is to be questioned from Tuesday on allegations that he recruited young activists for the network.

These included Khaled Kelkal, whose fingerprints were found on a bomb aimed at the high-speed Paris-Lyon train, which had 800 people on board. The bomb failed to go off. Kelkal was shot dead by police in September 1995.

The prosecution says several of the accused were trained by Islamic guerrillas in Afghanistan or Bosnia.

Under the French system, the defendants are not required to plead guilty or not guilty at this stage. But their lawyers have argued unsuccessfully that the trial should be delayed until those who actually placed the bombs are formally identified.

— Reuters, Paris

Bus drivers strike over urban violence

Bus crews in Mulhouse, eastern France, stopped work yesterday in protest against attacks by young people in troubled council estates on the edge of the town. This was the second strike of its kind in a French city in a couple of days.

Crews in Nancy, also in eastern France, stopped work on Saturday. Six young men, including five minors, were formally accused yesterday of attacking two bus-drivers in a

suburb of the city on Friday night. They face charges of "gang violence and theft" after allegedly menacing one driver with baseball bats and throwing stones at another.

The attacks follow a pattern of increasing violence in recent days in the so-called *quartiers difficiles* – suburbs with large concentrations of immigrants and unemployment – of several large French cities. There were near-riots in Lille last

week. In Mulhouse, three buses have been attacked by gangs of youths in the last three days. A bullet was fired right through one vehicle, smashing two windows and slightly injuring a passenger on Friday night; a tear-gas grenade was thrown at a second bus and a stone at a third. There have been 263 similar incidents in Mulhouse since the start of the year.

Bus crews stopped work in protest on Sunday night and 150

drivers staged a demonstration in the town yesterday morning.

The town hall promised them new measures to protect buses and their crews, including the hiring of 13 young unemployed people. The youngsters would be trained as "security assistants" by the police, the town hall said. Their job would be to the "install calm and dialogue" in public transport in the town.

— John Lichfield

13/MIAMI CUBANS

Patriarch's death opens door for dialogue with Castro

Jorge Mas Canosa, the anti-communist leader of the Cuban-American community in the US, died in Miami on Sunday. Phil Davison asks whether this will affect the Cuban exiles' stand towards Castro's regime or US policy towards Havana.

He was Fidel Castro's nemesis, the leader of Cuba's exiles and dedicated to the overthrow of the island's Communist leader. He had hoped to return to his homeland in glory, perhaps to become president once Castro had died or been ousted.

On Sunday, Jorge Mas Canosa, founder and chairman of the powerful Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) lobby group, died in Miami without returning to the island he fled as a 21-year-old in 1960. His old Communist enemy, now 71, is, of course, very much alive and still in control.

Mas Canosa had arrived penniless and built a construction and communications empire valued in the hundreds of millions of pounds. He had been ill for almost a year. But his death still stunned the 2 million Cuban exiles in the US, most in the Miami area, and plunged them into mourning.

The question is will Mas Canosa's hard line against Castro prevail among Cuban exiles? Or will the minority moderates gain strength in pressing for dialogue with the Cuban leader?

Mas Canosa's deputy at the CANF, Alberto Hernandez, who was his physician, is likely to head the organisation as interim leader until elections are held next July. But once the mourning is done, Cuban exiles are likely to engage in much soul-searching. Most still support trying to freeze Castro from power but they are increasingly conscious of the fact - symbolised by the fact that Castro has outlived Mas Canosa - that the hard-line policy has been unsuccessful.

Some Cuban-Americans loved Mas Canosa. Most certainly approved of his hard-line stance, aimed at tightening the screws on Castro until he could no longer survive. But a growing minority had criticised his intransigence.

Most exiles see no radical shift with the ANF founder gone. A recent poll showed that while the younger generation was critical of the hard-line stance on cultural ties with

Cuba, most backed the political hard line, including a continued US embargo. Mas Canosa tried to prevent Cuban musicians from playing here, or even Cuban groups' songs from being played on radio stations. Most younger exiles oppose that line.

Stripped of Mas Canosa's aggressiveness, the CANF may ease its campaign against moderates. Those who have spoken out in favour of dialogue with Castro have been ostracised, or even attacked. A Cuban woman lawyer who kissed Castro on the cheek at a reception in Havana was turned into a pariah by Mas Canosa supporters.

With the community's most influential figure gone, the moderate voice is likely to be heard. Embodying that voice is Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, who fought as a revolutionary commander with Castro, was later jailed for 22 years for opposing Communism and came to the US a few years ago.

Despite his long imprisonment, Mr Gutierrez Menoyo returned to Havana two years ago to talk to Castro and now, from Miami, pushes dialogue as the best way to edge the communist leader towards democracy. Yesterday he called Mas Canosa a dynamic leader but added pointedly that he would have liked to speak to him "in a politically civilised climate".

Mas Canosa's absence may have a major effect in Washington. "He was one of the most influential lobbyists in the country," a friend who asked not to be named said yesterday. "He knew everyone, he spoke good English, he knew the ins and outs on Capitol Hill. Many of the others on the CANF simply don't have the English."

"Without Jorge's pressure, Bill Clinton would never have changed his stance last year on the Helms-Burton bill," he said.

Mr Clinton had vetoed the bill, putting tight restrictions on foreign companies dealing with Cuba, until Cuban MiG fighters shot down two light aircraft, killing four Cuban exiles, over the Florida straits last year. At Mas Canosa's urging, Mr Clinton decided to back the bill.

With Mas Canosa gone, many non-Cubans in Miami predict a backlash against Cuban-Americans. They have become critical of the prevalence of the Spanish language in the Miami area and say Cuban exiles enjoy preferential treatment in the job market over immigrants from other nations as well as lifetime residents.

Obituary, page 19



A life in exile: The older generation have been fiercely loyal to Jorge Mas Canosa's hard line against Castro, but younger Cuban-Americans want at least the chance to see the island's musicians perform in America.
Photograph: Sylvain Grandadam/Colorific

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Bulgaria in Crisis

Appeal to Independent Readers

LEFT TO FREEZE
Yordan, 14, already malnourished could die from cold and hunger this winter unless aid reaches him now. With temperatures plummeting to -15°C Yordan's scant clothing and no shoes offer him little protection from the bitter cold and there is no money to heat his orphanage. There are 37,000 places in Bulgaria's orphanages.



No Money To Feed The Children No Money To Heat The Orphanages

Bulgaria is a country in the midst of a serious economic crisis. Unless urgent help is sent, thousands of children will suffer terribly this winter.

There is little money to heat the orphanages. Orphanage Directors are having to beg for food from local villages and rarely know where the next meal is coming from. In some areas children, like Yordan, are going hungry and the cold could prove fatal for many children this winter. Without aid this could be catastrophic for Bulgaria's orphanage children.

The European Children's Trust, sister charity of The Romanian Orphanage Trust, is ready to distribute emergency food packs, clothes and fuel to the orphanages in most need. Your gift today will save lives and bring hope.

£220,000 worth of emergency food packs to feed 20,000 children for a week or legal aid for 1000 children.

Please send whatever you can to help children survive the winter or call 01273 299399 NOW

I enclose £_____ to save Bulgarian orphanage children. Cheques to The European Children's Trust. Or debit my Access/Visa/CAF card

Card no. _____ Expiry date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

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Return to: Tanya Barron, (109), Bulgaria Emergency Appeal, The European Children's Trust, FREEPOST KE8394, 64-Queen Street, LONDON, EC4B 4AR or call 01273 299399 NOW. Registered Charity No. 1048737

Please act NOW - winter is coming



violence

Netanyahu faces toughest fight after best ally quits

The surprise resignation of Avigdor Lieberman, the hitherto all-powerful chief of staff of the Israeli prime minister, is sending shock-waves through the political establishment. Patrick Cockburn in Jerusalem asks if his departure means Mr Netanyahu's days are numbered.



Lieberman: Steered Netanyahu on road to the premiership of Israel

He looks evil or, at best, menacing. A heavy-set Russian immigrant with a black beard, full lips and dark, suspicious eyes, he became a symbol of what many Israelis dislike about their government. "A dangerous and detestable man," said one Israeli politician who did not want his name mentioned.

Now Avigdor Lieberman, 38, the man who made Mr Netanyahu leader of the Likud party and then, against the odds, prime minister of Israel, is gone. On Sunday he surprised the Israeli political world by announcing his resignation as director-general of the prime minister's office.

His departure comes in the wake of the most damaging crisis to hit Mr Netanyahu since he took power and one for which Mr Lieberman was blamed. Last week the Prime Minister, apparently breaking a promise to his ministers, moved to gain control of the nomination of Likud party candidates. This threatened the careers of all the party leaders, including cabinet ministers, who had ever opposed Mr Netanyahu.

Mr Lieberman took the blame, as he has so often done in the past. So tightly have he and Mr Netanyahu bonded since they met in 1987 that nobody quite knows where Mr Lieberman ends and Mr Netanyahu begins. Israeli politicians agree Mr Netanyahu will be briefly strengthened by getting rid of his chief henchman, but they wonder if, as in the US when President Nixon fired Bob Haldeman, his chief of staff, Israel's political leadership is not beginning to disintegrate.

Nobody doubts Mr Lieberman was key to the rise of Mr Netanyahu. Born in Kishinev, in Moldova, he emigrated to Is-

rael in 1978 and swiftly gravitated to the far right, belonging to a political club called Castel at Hebrew University. Along with Tzachi Hanegbi, the present Justice Minister, he was accused of organising attacks on Palestinian students.

Working as a security guard and, at one point, as the bouncer at the university disco, Mr Lieberman became a minor force within the Russian immigrant community. In 1987, when he first met Mr Netanyahu, then Israel's ambassador at the UN, his career began to flourish. He was the campaign manager who got Mr Netanyahu into the Knesset in 1988 and organised his bid for the leadership of Likud in 1993.

Mr Netanyahu had all the skills with the media but Mr Lieberman was the organiser of victory. He became director-general of Likud, reducing its debts by summary firings. He kept his nerve after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the prime minister, in 1995 and saw Mr Netanyahu just squeak home in the general election. As director-general of the prime minister's office Mr Lieberman was held responsible for encouraging an atmosphere of paranoia and playing on Mr Netanyahu's deeply suspicious nature.

He leaves office swearing loyalty to his boss. But Mr Netanyahu has shown in the past that he has limited time for old supporters. But the Prime Minister, some of whose ministers now believe they must get rid of him before he gets rid of them, is now facing his toughest fight since he took office. He soon may wish that he had Mr Lieberman by his side.

Washington tells China not to ease the pressure on Saddam

With discussion on Russia's proposals for solving the stand-off with Iraq stalled in the UN Security Council, the US is applying all its diplomatic leverage to prevent any dilution of the responsibilities of UNSCOM, the UN committee set up to oversee the dismantling of Iraq.

In Vancouver, where large numbers of White House and State Department staff have camped for this week's Asia-Pacific economic summit, the US is using bilateral meetings to press home its view that the UN must not bend to Iraqi pressure.

The US has paid particular attention to China, which chairs the UN Security Council until the end of this week. At a meeting with her Chinese counterpart, Qian Qichen, the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, said nothing short of Iraq's full compliance with UN resolutions, including inspections of all suspected

weapons facilities, would be acceptable to Washington. US officials have threatened to veto any Security Council decision that would weaken the original resolutions.

Over the weekend, William Cohen, the Defense Secretary, cited satellite evidence that Iraq was still trying to evade inspections and repeated the US view that sanctions can not be lifted until Iraq opened all its suspect installations to inspection. Russia has urged that a timetable be set for lifting sanctions to offer Iraq "light at the end of the tunnel".

China appears to lean to that view. After the Qian-Albright meeting, Chinese sources in Vancouver said Peking thought it important that a channel be kept open to Iraq, because "without dialogue there can be no co-operation".

President Clinton was due to meet the Chinese leader, Jiang Zemin, yesterday. — Mary Dejevsky, Vancouver

Tibet team to visit Britain

China is sending a high-level delegation from Tibet to London next week as part of an international propaganda offensive timed to coincide with the Hollywood film *Seven Years in Tibet*, which describes Tibet as an independent country.

The Foreign Office appears to be insisting that any programme it organises must include meetings with Tibet human rights lobby groups and a group of parliamentarians who support the Dalai Lama.

"We do have concerns about human rights in Tibet," said a Foreign Office spokesman. "So we would see this as an opportunity for us to express our concern directly to Raiki."

Raiki — he just has this one name — is the deputy Communist Party secretary in Tibet, and the highest ranking Tibetan within the Chinese-run system. He will head the seven-person delegation to Britain, all but two of whom are ethnic Tibetans.

The visit, from 3-5 December, will be the first official delegation from inside Tibet since 1948. Two years later, China invaded Tibet, eventually forcing the Dalai Lama to flee in 1959.

— Teresa Poole, Peking

Israelis kill three guerrillas in Lebanon

Israeli soldiers killed three guerrillas in south Lebanon yesterday and Israeli planes later raided suspected guerrilla targets, the army said.

"At least three terrorists were killed overnight during military activity of an armoured force near the northern line in the Western district of the security zone," an army spokesman said, referring to the border strip occupied by Israel. The guerrillas fired mortars at outposts of the

Israeli-allied militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), and at a Lebanese village during the clash, the spokesman said. No Israelis were killed.

On Sunday, at least eight Lebanese civilians were killed in an attack which Israel blamed on the Shia Muslim Amal movement on a village in the occupation zone. The Amal group denied it was behind the attack on Beit Liff.

— Reuters, Jerusalem



Transsexual: Dana International, who will sing for Israel next year at the Eurovision contest Photograph: Reuters

Orthodox rabbis in uproar over Israel's Eurovision sex-change diva

In a macho culture like Israel's — it is surprising. The Israeli representative at the 1998 Eurovision song contest in Birmingham next May will be Dana International, a transsexual who was picked for the role on Sunday night.

Having just failed to win the nomination last year, she will sing a song called "Diva", chosen over 14 other songs by a committee nominated by the Israeli Broadcasting Authority.

Dana International, born Yaron Cohen in Tel Aviv some 25 years ago, comes from a traditional, working-class Yemenite-Jewish background and sings in Arabic as well as in Hebrew, French and English. Avoiding conscription

into the army as an open homosexual when a teenager, Dana had a sex-change operation in London in 1993.

All this is unusual in Israel where musical culture is often derivative or old-fashioned, symbolised by the fact that the Eurovision song contest is still taken seriously.

"People in Israel don't know what drag is, they don't know how to appreciate it — it is a very primitive country sometimes," she told the *Jerusalem Post*.

The situation is perplexing for ultra-Orthodox rabbis who denounce ordinary female performers and now find Israel represented by a transsexual. One rabbi confused the issue further by saying that men

could attend her live performances — so long as they knew Dana was really a man. She says she has faced little harassment, though there are parts of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv where a woman with bare arms will be spat at.

Voted female singer of the year by listeners to one Israeli radio station, Dana's career began seven years ago after she was discovered working in a show in Tel Aviv.

Some Israeli commentators see her success as a gimmick. One record reviewer describes Dana's work as "pseudo-provocative garbage". Others say that a gimmick could not have sustained her career for so long. Danny Peled, manager of

Army Radio's music department, was quoted as saying: "The kids don't really care if she is a boy or a girl — only the adults seem hung up on that. There is a real thirst for dance music among young people in Israel, in large part because they are now exposed to it on MTV and the like. The dance genre is just developing in Israel and Dana has made a huge impact on it."

Most of her songs are in Hebrew. However, as a Yemenite, she says: "I like to sing in Arabic. I like the language, I like the music. I like the instruments." Her manager claims that 500,000 cassettes of her music have been sold in Cairo alone.

— Patrick Cockburn, Jerusalem

The Royal Opera - 2 for 1 ticket offer Save up to £75

The Independent and Independent on Sunday are giving you the opportunity to experience the opera. In association with The Royal Opera we are offering you 2 tickets for the price of 1 to the Autumn and Winter 1997/98 season. You can choose to see any of three productions - The Merry Widow, The Barber of Seville and Paul Bunyan all showing at the Shaftesbury Theatre.

How to Qualify
For each 2 for 1 ticket application simply collect 3 tokens from the Independent and Independent on Sunday (tokens will be printed every day until Friday 28 November) and telephone The Royal Opera House box

office on either 0171 304 4000 or 0171 379 5399 (lines are open between 10am and 7pm) identifying yourself as an Independent reader. If paying by credit card you will be asked to hand in your tokens when you collect your tickets. If paying by cheque please enclose your three tokens (you will be advised of the address when booking). You may apply twice for the offer, collecting 3 tokens per application.

Paul Bunyan

Offer available 10 11 13 15 17 December
Ticket Prices: £48.50, £39, £36, £32, £18.50
Paul Bunyan is an American folk hero of gigantic height who became the greatest lumberjack in history, or so legend says. His work sites, and his fights, created geographical wonders like the Grand Canyon and the Rockies.

Bunyan's adventures are an allegory of the development of virgin North America in the pioneer days.

The Barber of Seville

Offer available on 7 10 12 14 February
Ticket prices: £75, £66, £62, £57, £33.
The Barber of Seville is the first modern comic opera. Rossini was the star composer of an era when opera moved out of aristocratic circles into boulevard theatres. He believed his audiences would laugh at what they could recognise.

In this opera, Rossini has all the classic classic characters from commedia dell'arte; who have been around from

The Merry Widow

Offer available 31 December 1 2 3 5 6 7 8 9 10 January
Ticket prices: £65, £58, £56, £51, £30.
Like The Barber of Seville, The Merry Widow is a first. Most operettas are about sex and money, but few as provocatively as Lehar's. The story takes place in embassy circles in turn of the century Paris. It discusses the affairs of a romantic little prince and his rival Rudolf Rassendyl's Ruritania in The Prisoner of Zenda (book and operetta are

near contemporaries). Its music is awash with gorgeous tunes - and wonderful dances - evoking middle-European folklore, written with the skill of a Richard Strauss or Puccini (more contemporaries). The very word 'operetta' means escapism - usually.

But what's best about The Widow is its realism. Its heroine has been married before for all the worst reasons - on the rebound from an unhappy affair, and for money. Its hero met the heroine before and rejected her for all the worst reasons - family pressure, and money - and then went off on a seriously naughty bender in Paris. He loves her, but can't bring himself to say it. Meanwhile, everyone else in sight is bending over backwards to be unfaithful. It's realistic. It's funny and it's sad. This perfect theatrical combination gave Lehar a monster hit in Vienna, Paris, London and New York.

Terms and Conditions

To qualify for the offer applicants must collect three differently numbered tokens. Tokens are published every day between November 22 and November 28. Only the tokens printed in The Independent and Independent on Sunday are valid. Photocopies or any other reproductions will not be accepted. The offer is for 2 tickets for the price of 1 for each application. Each set of three tokens collected allows you to take advantage of the 2 for 1 offer. The free ticket may only have a value equal to or less than the purchased ticket. This offer is only valid for the three productions mentioned above. The Royal Opera House standard terms and conditions of purchase apply to this offer. The offer is subject to availability. No cash alternatives will be accepted. The promoters are The Independent and The Royal Opera House.



The Merry Widow Photograph: Laurie Lewis



150 من المال

15/WINNIE AT BAY

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY
25 NOVEMBER 1997
15

'Mother of the Nation' linked to a long litany of horror

Winnie Mandela strode into a Johannesburg hall yesterday, flanked by bodyguards, for a five-day hearing on the activities of her notorious Mandela United football team. She is linked to eight murders and an array of violent crimes. Mary Braid watched.

Most of the time Winnie Mandela looked nonchalantly at the witnesses through her trademark bejewelled glasses. One murder accusation prompted her to laugh out loud. But as the accounts of killings, assaults and jealous attacks on pregnant love rivals piled up in the sweltering room, packed with the world's press, even the ice-cool Mrs Mandela, in her stylish white-and-powder blue suit, began to look a little ragged.

The allegations were not new. For eight years the parents of missing township teenagers and former members of the "football club" - bodyguards set up by Mrs Mandela in the late 1980s and who terrorised Soweto - have been telling journalists that the "Mother of the Nation", though feted by the world, was, in fact a crazed, brutal murderer.

What made her appearance a world media event yesterday was that her accusers - all 34 - were finally gathered together and for the first time given official recognition through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the body charged with exposing atrocities from the apartheid era.

The hearing was spiced up by the ANC's apparent abandonment of the woman whose face still adorns the entrance of its Johannesburg headquarters and who is still president of its Women's League. Last week a scathing press article, sanctioned by her former husband, President Nelson Mandela, suggested she had at last been hung out to dry.

To cast out the darling of the grass roots is a risky strategy. Next month Mrs Mandela runs for the deputy leadership of the ANC as her ex-husband steps down as leader. This week may make or break her.

Anyone else faced with allegations like these would quietly retire from public life. As the first five accusers gave evidence yesterday in what Archbishop Desmond Tutu,



Winnie Mandela and her lawyer, Ismail Sernanya, at yesterday's hearing in Johannesburg. For the first time all her accusers were gathered together and were for the first time given official recognition by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Photograph: Reuters

paper and the room began to swelter, Nomasa Shabalala accused her of murdering her son and demanded Mrs Mandela give her his remains. She claimed she was terrified of Mrs Mandela, who appeared not to mind "the sight of blood in her house." "We were advised not to approach her," she said. "Winnie has bodyguards and... I was scared that the fate that befell my son would befall us."

Sex complemented violence. Phunfile Dlamini broke down as she told how Mrs Mandela assaulted her in a fit of jealousy after finding she was pregnant by Shakes (Johannes Tau), a team member with whom Mrs Mandela was also sleeping. Ms Dlamini said Mrs Mandela attacked her with her fists before ordering team members to beat her. The assault lasted five hours. She said her child - now nine - was mentally handicapped as a result.

Ms Dlamini claimed Mrs Mandela's daughter Zinzi persuaded her mother to stop the assault. The hearing was told Zinzi, sitting behind her mother at the hearing, denied this.

Mrs Mandela is not scheduled to give evidence until Friday. But yesterday everyone wondered if they were witnessing a political beginning or end. Was she finally being drummed out by the party? "I do hope so," said one ANC stalwart in the hall.

That was inside. Outside, her supporters were brandishing placards that read "Injury to Winnie Mandela is injury to South Africa."

The Winnie fan club turn-out was pathetically small. But those that were there were disciples. Rita Koza, of the Soweto branch of the ANC Women's League, said: "We in the struggle understand the context Winnie was working in. She had to be strong."

"It was a time when we said 'Let us fight. Let us die and let us kill if necessary.'"

the TRC chairman, emphasised was a search for truth, not a trial, there was speculation that it could, yet, come to that. Mrs Mandela has ignored ANC advice to ask for amnesty, which would protect her from future criminal prosecution.

The most dramatic testimony yesterday came from John Morgan, who claimed to have been Mrs Mandela's driver. He said he saw Mrs Mandela start beating Stompie Seipei Mooketsi, 14, in her Soweto home

a few days before he was found on wasteland with his throat slit. Mrs Mandela has denied any part in his murder.

Mr Morgan said the boy, suspected of being a police spy, was kept at Mrs Mandela's house for three days and repeatedly assaulted. "When I found him his face was as round as a football," he said. "I tried to help him drink some coffee and feed him some bread."

But the evidence of former associates

is often tainted; Mr Morgan was convicted, like Mrs Mandela, of being involved in Stompie's kidnapping - and the most compelling - and moving - evidence came from parents with stories that were the stuff of horror films, not the proud liberation struggle.

Nicodemus Sono, who had considered Mrs Mandela a friend, said that she brought his son Lolo to his house one night in November 1988.

He was lying bleeding and bruised in the

back of a van. Mrs Mandela claimed Lolo was a spy.

"I have never seen that side of her before," said Mr Sono. "She was very aggressive... She said she was taking this dog away. The movement would know what to do with him." Mr Sono said he pleaded for his son's life. Lolo was never seen again. Mr Sono said the ANC refused to investigate his son's disappearance.

As Mrs Mandela fanned herself with

Star witness claims he saw boy being stabbed

He was the witness Nelson Mandela forecast would not dare to return to South Africa. The President suggested last week that Katiza Cebekhulu was just too flaky and unreliable a witness.

But the diminutive Mr Cebekhulu kept his promise to return yesterday if his safety was guaranteed. Tucked away in the far corner of the witness rows, only yards from Mrs Mandela and her lawyers, it was only the presence of his self-styled champion, the former Tby MP (and now baroness) Emma Nicholson, in quiet canary yellow, which gave him away.

It is not as if there is a shortage of interesting witnesses-in-waiting. One man, under prison guard, nursed a small football as he waited for his turn.

But Mr Cebekhulu is expected to be one of this week's star turns. His story was told in *Katiza's Journey*, a book by the British journalist Fred Bridgland, who was in the hall covering the hearings. It caused a sensation in South Africa when it was released. In it Mr Cebekhulu claims he saw Mrs Mandela stab Stompie Seipei Mooketsi, 14, in the garden of her Soweto home. A key witness at the trial at which she was

convicted of kidnapping the boy, Mr Cebekhulu disappeared before proceedings started. He claims he was spirited out of the country by the ANC to save the "Mother of the Nation". The book also claims that President Mandela arranged his disappearance. Lured away, he says, by promises of comfort and education, Mr Cebekhulu ended up in Zambia, where Baroness Nicholson eventually chanced upon him languishing in a Lusaka jail.

Mr Cebekhulu, dismissed as a lunatic by Mrs Mandela, was granted immunity from arrest for the kidnapping and assault of

Stompie so that he could testify this week. He is under witness protection and the TRC refuses to discuss his movements for security reasons.

Other witnesses include the brother of Abu Baker Asvat, a doctor murdered during a robbery at his surgery after Stompie's death. Witnesses will say Mrs Mandela asked Dr Asvat, a family friend, to treat Stompie and that he refused, insisting the boy go to hospital. Dr Asvat's killers recently claimed from prison that they were ordered to kill him by Mrs Mandela.

— Mary Braid



Katiza Cebekhulu, who kept his promise to return to testify, at the hearing with his self-styled champion, Baroness Nicholson. Photograph: Reuters

THE INDEPENDENT

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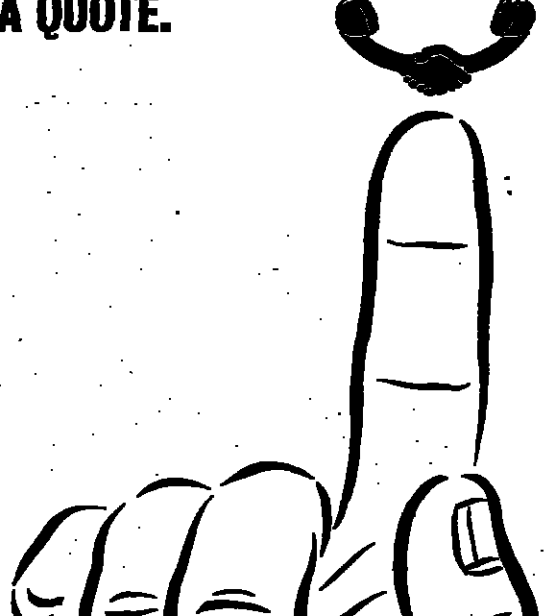
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The day I learnt to just say no

REVELATIONS

The time: August 1996
The place: Surrey
The woman: Ruthie Henshall, star of *Chicago*

I can remember the moment I finally changed. Somebody wanted me to do a press conference on a Sunday and told me it was really important. I had just one day off. My gut was saying, I don't want to go all the way into London and feel stressed. So I said nicely: "No, I'm not going to do that. I will do it any other day, but not this Sunday. My time is my own." I felt fantastic and wanted to phone everybody with the news!

I had worked continually for 10 years because I was frightened to turn anything down. I didn't know how to say no professionally. I certainly didn't know how to say no in my private life. If someone would ask: "Could I borrow that really lovely designer dress of yours?" I would say yes, but I'd be thinking: "I don't want somebody else to sweat in my favourite dress and I certainly don't want canapés down it." I was making myself powerless.

I had a wonderful fiancé, the actor John Gordon Sinclair, and the dreams I'd followed since I was a little girl had all come true. I was doing new shows, playing leads and had choice in my life. Yet I didn't like the way I felt. I was disappointed with myself because I didn't feel I was living my life for me. I'm normally a very happy person but there was an aching in my soul. I was down because when I wasn't performing and being appreciated by the audience, I felt useless.

So, when I finished my stint on *Oliver!* I decided to take some time out. I told myself that I had found love and that was more important to me than work. Men hadn't been very important to me, but when I met Gordie I just knew he was the man I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. I remember clearly the moment that I actually fell in love. It was a Sunday.

We had been away from each other for just one day, we'd been rehearsing all week for a musical we were in together. He phoned up and left a message on my answering machine. I was devastated about missing him and I thought, why am I feeling like this about somebody who I'm just working with? The next day, he turned to me and said: "I miss

you on Sundays, what's going on here?"

I confessed that I didn't know but that I felt the same. We had a good cuddle, held each other and talked terribly honestly about everything. It was amazing because normally when you're really attracted to someone you can't be yourself because you're monitoring everything you say and worrying what they will think! It might sound very unexciting, and I don't mean it like that, but suddenly I felt like I had got a pair of old shoes on. It's really bizarre but it just felt so comfortable. It developed slowly and our relationship is just wonderful.

Anyway, I promised myself that after *Oliver!* the next job I took would be something I wanted so desperately that I bit their hand off. Really, I didn't know what I wanted to do next.

We got on Gordie's Harley and went on a bit of a biking trip. Then I potted about our home in Surrey and became house proud for the first time. For nine months I did my own thing and I have to admit that I was very, very down.

I needed to learn to be happy with my own company, which is something I wasn't comfortable with and I'm still learning. I had to discover my qualities other than what I do on stage. I did an art course, beginners painting and drawing, at the local Adult Education classes. It was brilliant every week when I did something for me. The scope of the people was incredible - solicitors, microbiologists, store detectives. There was one very spiritual lady and once when I was standing by the sink, washing my palette, I said, "I hate washing up so much." She replied wisely, "I don't. I use it for time to think. Often you can't change what you have to do but you can change your attitude."

Sometimes you don't understand why you're going through a period of being stuck and it's not until afterwards that you realise why you needed that time. I had to find out that although work is really important, what is equally vital is that I'm happy off stage and that I give myself time. For 10 years, I did everything for everybody else but hardly anything for myself. I've tried to get into meditation. I manage it occasionally but I'm still bad at finding time each day when I don't think I should be up to something else. However, I do take a couple of hours



a week and feel no guilt about escaping with a couple of books. I've learnt that if you find yourself saying "I ought" or "I should" you're listening to the wrong voices in your head. I've found extra time because I've learnt to say no.

Gordie is very much his own person. I've watched him doing what he wants to do in life and nobody hates him for it - they actually respect him. You know where you stand with him. I'm now finding the same skill and I'm much happier because I'm doing what I want to do rather than what other people expect.

Saying no also means that you're free when something you really want to do comes along. If I had gone with a particular

job I was offered I would have missed out on my solo singing tour and *Chicago* - which is a life-changing part for me. I'd always played the ingénue or tragedy but comedy is something I have loved for years. Now I've found the right comic role, and there's also great dancing. I can show people a different side so I'm not pigeon-holed. I play a woman who has got her name in the papers and she might finally get what she's always wanted - her own act. OK, she had to shoot somebody to do it but, you know what, she's making the best of the situation. She's a bit like me.

Gordie has loved watching the show develop. He's my hardest critic and won't let me

off the hook. He told me on the opening night how proud he was of me. I can't tell you how that made me feel. I didn't cry but I wanted to; when you're growing up you want your parents' approval and now I really want Gordie's approval because I admire him so much.

Before my nine months in Surrey I couldn't be true to myself. Now I have a clearer, broader vision of everything. I want to go travelling, get on the Harley Davidson and go across America. I want to live there for a while, too. I would love children, although it doesn't seem likely in the next few years. I do feel, however, that now I would make a good mother. Previously, I would have had children to

love me rather than being ready to nurture them. I've realised there's more to life than work. No man and no job can make you happy. You have to make yourself happy. I was too busy putting on a front and being Ruthie the performer to notice how sad I was. I was using all these things in my life as a distraction. My ultimate goal now is to feel contented, I don't know if I ever will. I love what I do with a passion. I love Gordie and my family deeply, but they can't single-handedly make me happy - that's up to me.

Interview by Andrew G Marshall

'Chicago' is at the Adelphi Theatre, London WC2 (box office 0171-344 0055).



"He's my hardest critic," says Ruthie Henshall of her fiancé John Gordon Sinclair. "When you're growing up you want your parents' approval. And now I really want Gordie's."

THE INDEPENDENT

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Even Santa can't dish up a perfect Christmas

When Operation Yuletide swings into action there will be plenty of blood, sweat and tears, and the children will still not be satisfied.

Diana Appleby says forget The Perfect Home, rope in Granny, and follow her tips for a breakdown-free Christmas.

"Jingly bells! Jingly bells!" My four-year-old is already working herself up into a state of hysteria at the very thought of Christmas. She spends all our car journeys bouncing up and down, yelling out "Wudolf, the wed-nosed weindeer" and "We wish you a Merry Kwisnas" etc. etc. I can tell you, it's all getting a little bit wearing.

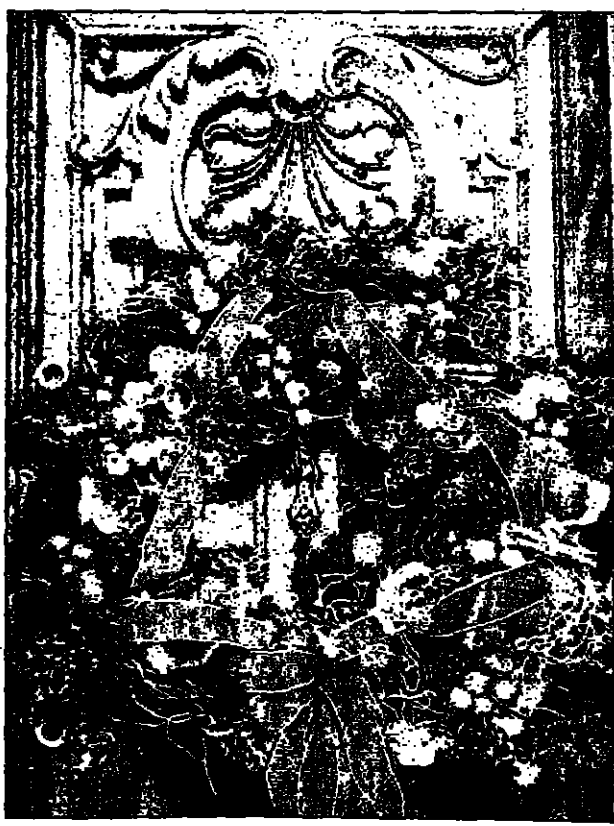
My nine-year-old spends hours in her bedroom, compiling vast lists for Father Christmas which veer from the distinctly possible - the new Spice Girls album - to the frankly insane, ie a new mountain bike with nine-speed gears and an Arab pony. As it's still only the end of November, I can see I'm going to have to administer Valium by next week and the dawn of the Advent Calendar. By Christmas Eve they will have self-combusted, which will at least save on one lot of presents.

The problem for most parents is that children have annexed Christmas. I can remember a time when Christmas centred around me and what I wanted to do - lots of parties, buying new dresses, getting drunk, belting out Christmas carols and having tender, romantic moments with the One You Love. Now it's one long, frantic child-fest. From the moment they break up

for the Christmas holidays, Operation Yuletide swings into action. Trips into heaving cities to spend £20 so they get two seconds on a disgruntled Santa's knee. Excruciating trips to the pantomime, when you pray to God you won't get picked on by Dick Whittington's cat. Christmas Eves spent frantically wrapping the presents you thought would take about two hours and end up taking six. We excelled ourselves one year by buying our eldest daughter a doll's house. The box looked big enough to contain a house, but when we opened it up, just to check, out fell a million pieces. "Jesus wept," said my husband, who'd already consumed the best part of half a bottle of whisky. At three in the morning we were still crouched owlishly over this bloody thing, sticking miniature flowers on to miniature stalks, holding up tiny pieces of plastic saying "What about this bit?"

Then there's all the martyrdom which women do so well. A recent survey by the advertising agency J Walter Thompson shows women more than ever are under pressure to create "The Perfect Lifestyle" for their families at Christmas. When questioned, 80 per cent of men said they looked forward to Christmas as a "good break". Only 35 per cent of women felt the same. What a surprise.

Most of us go about with a pinched, martyred air at Christmas. That's because we have to do all the shopping, all the cooking, all the arranging. Then there are all those unspeakable magazines which beseech you to create "The Perfect Home" at Christmas. So instead of propping yourself up in front of a film with a bottle of Chardonnay, we're all supposed to be in the kitchen making



marvellous table decorations out of some old pine cones, an orange and yards of red velvet. I can't even tie a bow, and give me a piece of florist's wire and I'll show you a severe injury.

"Of course it's really all for the children," people say. Well, I have had enough of crawling downstairs on Christmas morning with a hangover to find the children diving into huge pillow cases full of presents, while I have to pretend I don't mind that I've only got five, and two are from the dog. I'm fed up with watching *Wallace and Gromit* when I want to watch the film on the other side. I'm fed up with spending all Christmas Day assembling bikes and toys. I'm fed up with spending hundreds and hundreds of pounds on a

completely ungrateful family, who end up having a massive row because one got Barbie's Bathroom and the other one didn't. So this year I am compiling the "Selfish Parents' Guide to Christmas". It goes as follows:

- Feel no shame in palming your children off with whoever will have them. Let them go and stay at Granny's for a week some time over the holidays and do not worry they will exhaust her. Of course they will.
- Go out for a wonderful, expensive meal - and stay the night. Pay the babysitter double to stay on - what the heck. This year, on the weekend before, we're going to go to the Feathers at Woodstock, which does a perfect line in grown-up Christmases, ie lots of holly, champagne - and quiet.

- Decorate the house and tree as you want to. Ban all those paper-chains - far too common. Decorate the tree with lots of white bows and white lights. Chuck out the pink tinsel, the fairy showing her knickers, and any decorations your children may have made at school.

- Spend as much on yourself as you do on the children.

- Buy the children everything you want them to have, not what they really want, because children have no taste.

- Book yourself into a health farm for the weekend after Christmas.

- Bribe grandparents or friends to have the children.

- Am considering dragging my husband off to Hoar Cross Hall, in Staffordshire, because it has a gym and a bar. Perfect.

- Make your husband cook Christmas dinner. It will be good for his soul.

- Shop on your own. Never, never try to shop at Christmas with your children.

- Make granny take them to see Father Christmas/the pantomime.

- Accept in advance that everything will go horribly wrong on Christmas Day and you will cry. I always do.

- Leave "The Perfect Christmas" to those glossy magazines. They didn't make those decorations, you dummy, they bought them.

- Buy all your food ready-made. Self-made Christmas puddings taste like hell and you'd have to start now.

- Buy your children lots and lots of videos for Christmas. Stop torturing yourself about whether they're educationally sound. Who cares - it keeps them quiet for hours while you get to eat chocolate and read your new books. Merry Christmas.

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17/VISUAL ARTS

Taking a walk on the wild side of Sicily

Richard Long walks for Art. Across the Sahara, the Himalayas, the Scottish highlands. And now the innocent abroad has tramped through the Mafia lands of Sicily, creating mud drawings and stone sculptures, to become a local hero. Jonathan Jones falls in step.

We were coming into Palermo from the airport when someone pointed out the place where Giovanni Falcone was blown up by the Mafia in 1992 for his campaign against organised crime, here on the motorway, beneath a looming rocky hillside. Judge Falcone's death has become part of the landscape of Sicily. The nondescript spot where he died has been absorbed into the island's mythology along with *The Godfather*, and the lake where Persephone was dragged down into the Underworld. This is the blood-soaked Arcadia into which the artist Richard Long walked.

"Richard's walk actually takes him through Corleone," his press agent told me, "but he didn't think that should be mentioned on the press release." Richard Long is an unworldly man. He would never contrive a publicity stunt. It occurred to me that for 30 years he's been doing what Samuel L. Jackson vows to do in *Pulp Fiction*, just walking the earth having adventures, like in *Kung Fu*. He looks the part, a tall, gaunt figure with bushy eyebrows and a little round-brimmed sunhat, wearing a check shirt and drainpipe jeans, part preacher, part cowboy. When he works on a sculpture, he wears a bandana depicting the Kyoto rock garden that expresses his affinity for Zen Buddhism.

"The fact I had a few days spare to make a three-day walk across Sicily, that by chance took me through the epicentre of the Mafia world, which is Corleone - that's complete coincidence," explains Long when I meet up with him in Palermo. "But since I've come to Sicily, it's good to use my walking energy and water energy in the mud circle and my stone energy."



To the Underworld and back Richard Long puts the finishing touches to his 'Circle of Life' at Spazio Zero, Palermo

Photo: Shobha

Richard Long's self-effacing art covers vast areas of the planet. He's transformed entire landscapes, including the Sahara, the Himalayas and the Scottish highlands, into works by Richard Long. Yet only by the luckiest of coincidences will anyone travelling in these territories find any trace of his passing. Long is in a tradition of English explorers, laying claim to land on behalf of his distinctively English aesthetic, and at the same time disappearing into the earth he walks on. He told me how he was kidnapped, probably by Kurds, while walking in eastern Turkey and bundled into the back of a truck with animals. He thought he was about to be killed. Instead he was taken to a village in the mountains and fed an enormous meal while the villagers looked on. Then he was dumped at the nearest bus-stop and told never to visit that part of the world again. Long's art replaces the painted landscapes of Richard Wilson or Constable with his own dangerous journeys, always with the possibility that he won't come back. Thames and Hudson have just published Long's book, *A*

Walk Across England, but I caught up with him miles away from anything like a launch party, working on an exhibition in a former aircraft hangar on the outskirts of Palermo. "I ticked the box marked 'No Publicity'," he jokes about his reluctance to give interviews. He's not an easy man to get close to and, after following him around for a couple of days, I started to feel like the stray kitten he allowed to clamber about on the sculpture he was making, tolerated and indulged. My first glimpse of the inner Long came when I watched him climb a tree.

We'd just finished lunch in Piazza Marina, a Palermo square lined with crumbling 17th-century palaces. Someone suggested coffee but Long wanted to be moving. We walked across the square and Long stopped underneath a giant, ugly tree. Suddenly he climbed on its thick roots and clambered inside a hollow in the trunk, forgetting everything else in his single-minded enjoyment of nature. Richard Long is a wild man, more at home in a landscape than among people.

"For me, solitude and independence are very energising," he says, when we are chatting later in an apartment full of Italian street noises - whizzing scooters, honking car horns, rows. "It's very relaxing and it's imaginative and it's a great state of mind, despite all the hardships and foot

worship. "There's a whole history of walking," he reminds me, "not only in English culture going back to the Romantic poets - Wordsworth was a great walker, and Coleridge - but in most cultures of the world." Yet no one has done it quite like Richard Long. "I'm proud of the fact that when I made my

was a very imaginative, idealistic time," Long tells me, "that's just a fact. It's that moment in history when the whole language of art could be reinvented, and it was reinvented through Conceptual art. Minimal art. Performance art. Land art." He started making walks when he was a student at St Martin's in 1967 and 1968; these works instantly made sense in the climate of Conceptualism. Yet he'd been doing much the same thing all his life, almost compulsively, before he knew anything about the international avant-garde. It's not insulting Richard Long to call him a naive artist. "There was never a point where I became an artist. When I was a young

kid, I was always drawing and painting all over my bedroom walls - I used to make mud pies and stuff. Art keeps me in touch with my childhood. I still skim stones across rivers, and the great thing is I've been able to use it to make art."

Only an innocent would plan a walk from Palermo on the north coast of Sicily to Agrigento on the south coast without considering that it would

'It's about the immediate physical engagement with the world, whether it's the size of a country or the size of a stone'

soreness and wind and rain and all the stuff you get on any walk." The perfect moment on a walk, the revelation he searches for, is that sense of "being one-to-one" with a landscape, "so there's no intermediary stuff like using machines or social company. It's a kind of purity."

Richard Long is not the first person to associate walking with solitude and nature-

first 10-mile straight line across Exmoor, no one had made a walk like that in the history of culture. I've been able to invent a completely new way to make walking into art."

Long's way of walking belongs to the late Sixties. His generation rejected Pop art and its celebration of the consumer society. They chose instead to go "underground", as he puts it, and rethink the nature of art. "It

Albanesi, near the mountain pass where Salvatore Giuliano massacred Communist sympathisers on Mafia orders on May Day, 1947. He was menaced by a pack of wild dogs between here and Corleone. In the notorious Mafia town itself, he was watched by groups of men sitting conspiratorially. The very movement of Long's walk from north to south - downwards, from the top to the bottom - conjures a descent into the Underworld that, in ancient myth, lies beneath Sicily. Long evoked the mouth of the Underworld again when he painted a gaping black circle, 19 metres in diameter, on the floor of Spazio Zero, the art space in Palermo where he currently has an exhibition. Long's gallery works, his stone sculptures and mud drawings, imitate the scale and power of landscape. His black hole on the ground was an abyss, a void, the way to Hades. I watch him as he throws mud from a bucket to cover up this darkness.

"Sicily is promoting culture as the antidote to its Mafia history," he tells me, "which is great." He's become a hero to Sicilians. He was invited to the island for Palermo's Festival of the Twentieth Century along with Peter Greenaway and Harold Pinter. Their work went down well but Long was undoubtedly the star; we went to a restaurant one night and he was fêted by the management while Pinter waited for a table. Sicilians responded with such intensity because Long's art has direct significance for an island desperate to cleanse the blood from its landscape. He is helping Sicily to exorcise its demons, simply by going for a walk across a landscape that still frightens foreigners and locals alike with stories of kidnappings and murder. For Richard Long, this was just another adventure on his journey. He's been walking all his life and he shows no sign of slowing down, of hanging up his boots and staying at home in Bristol. Perhaps one day he'll just vanish down the road. Exhibition: Spazio Zero, Palermo, Sicily (0039 91 7434311) to 15 January 1998. Book: *A Walk Across England* published by Thames and Hudson, £18.99

Now you see them - soon you probably won't

With Prince Charles and Brian Sewell as guest curators, The Mall Galleries can hardly have been aiming for another 'Sensation'. And no, there isn't a YBA in sight. Nor, Andrew Lambirth regrets, much else to tease 'The Discerning Eye'.

"The Discerning Eye" is usually an open-submission exhibition selected by six eminent individuals: two artists, two critics and two collectors. The idea is that the public uses a discerning eye to compare and contrast the coming artist with the established. By and large, the works are small, and therefore affordable, though this is by no means always the case. The problem with all large mixed exhibitions is the muddle.

Perhaps the visitor gravitates to the selector whose name he knows best or whose work he most sympathises with, or perhaps admires. This might be Prince Charles or Brian Sewell. Again, it might not. The selector best off in this show is the painter Michael Reynolds. Not only is his own work substantially represented in Brian Sewell's selection, but he has a separate room in which to hang his choice. To find it, enter the Mall Galleries by the front door, and go down the stairs to the right. There you will find the likes of Leonard McComb depicting a group of green and orange ridgy tomatoes; or George Rowlett lovingly lashing on the impasto to capture the East Kent countryside; or Jenny Durrant weaving inventive patterns of rich colour.

Continuing at sub-ground level, the visitor may pass through into the main gallery.



Brian Sewell's choice: Igor Kufayev's 'Soon Is Full Moon'

There he or she will encounter the other artist-selector, Ray Richardson. This body of work is altogether more tricky and sophisticated, wreathed in modernist references and knowing allusions. Note the *faux-naïveté* of Simon Laurie, aping the real naïveté of Alfred Wallis. Or the Bill Jacklin

crowd-scene take-offs by Jonathan Huxley. Veteran abstract painter Bert Irvin contributes two works that look as fresh and joyful as ever.

Further along, the collector AN Solomons reasserts traditional painterly portraits, still-lives and landscapes that are competent but largely unin-

spired. The exception is a bright interior landscape by Gus Cummins, a table-top strewn with things: a reel, a cylinder, cubes - all sharp colour-accents and mysterious long shadows.

The other collector is HRH the Prince of Wales, whose choice inclines rather towards the quirky than the controversial. Light-filled landscapes are evidently a favourite, such as Norman Sayle's brisk water-colour of a house in Menorca. A more evanescent mood is caught by Sarah Armstrong Jones, cousin to the Prince, and a watercolourist of quiet but authoritative atmospheres. By contrast, three brightly-patterned, almost Islamic, paintings by Kate Montgomery stand out on this predominantly well-behaved and low-key wall.

From there to the critic Susan Moore's choice, Harriet Mena Hill, one of our better younger painters, is well-rep-

resented with three paintings. Two feature evocative cell-like structures resembling the pattern of dry-stone walls and fields seen from the air, all dark and bright. The third is of a triple archway with diamond-patterned floor and holy water stoup. Among Moore's choices are also old favourites such as Leonard Rosoman and Norman Blamey, and the hallucinatory realism of Alan Robb's painting, *Auchmithie stones and bladderwrack*.

If you follow this route through the exhibition, it ends with a bang - Brian Sewell's choice. Typically, Sewell flouts the rules and has invited six artists to submit. A group of works by each of them is hung with other individual items taken from the public send-in. Thus there are 10 dark Goya-esque paintings by Ansel Krul, and a dozen orangey-brown mythic nudes by Igor Kufayev,

in which Frank Dobson meets Maillol. The sculpture dotted throughout the exhibition is generally appalling, and Sewell's choice is no exception. The best things in this section are undoubtedly the dozen paintings by Peter Spens - landscapes of real accomplishment.

Prince Charles himself has said he found fascinating the fact that so many of the artists he'd chosen had never been heard of, nor even been to art school. While not for a moment wishing to deprive them of their 15 minutes of glory, the reason that so many are - and will remain - obscure, is that they will never produce anything to change the course of art. However charming, these exhibits could scarcely be called earth-shattering. Nor inventive. Nor challenging. They are in fact far too easy on the eye.

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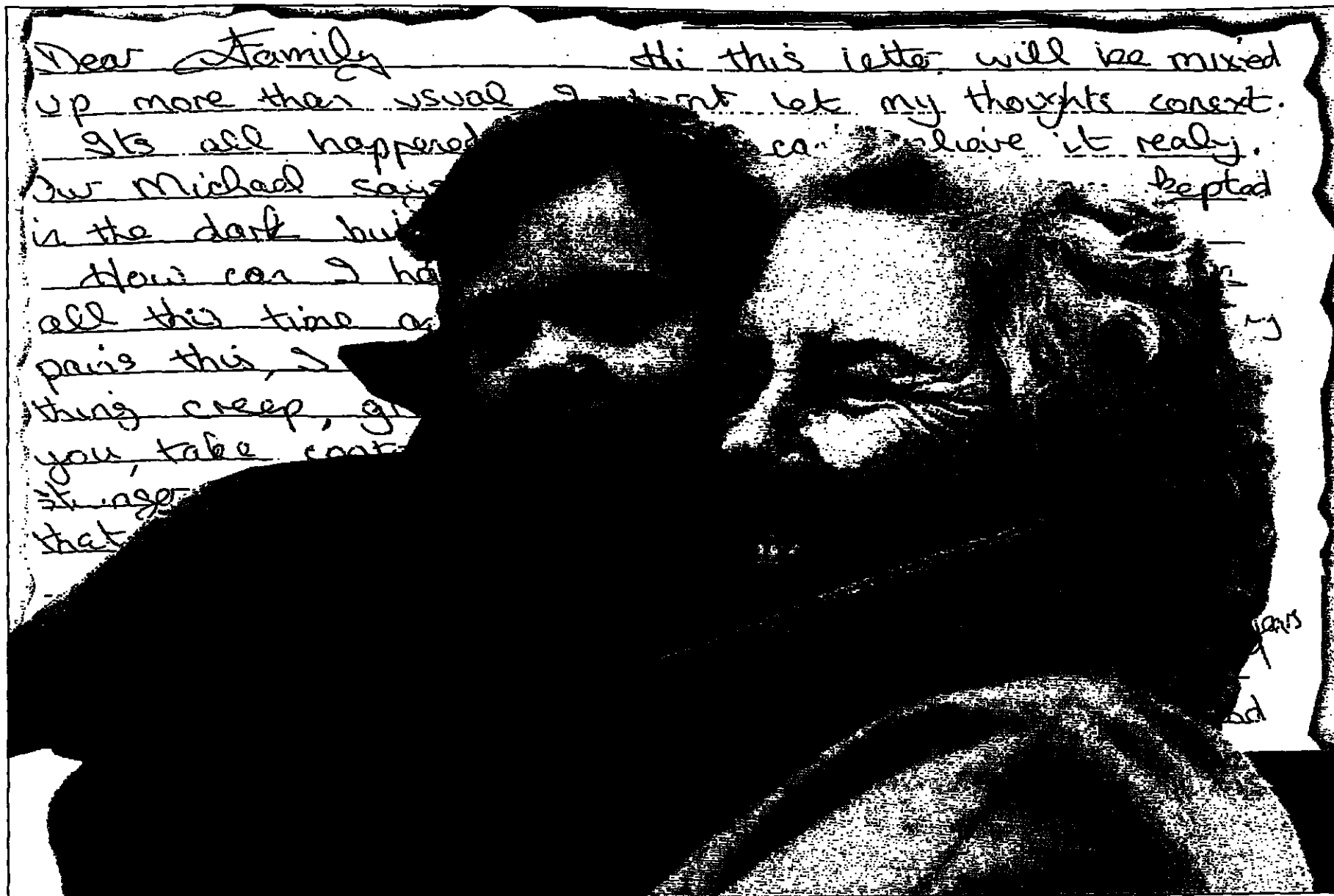
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sbc

'I have to get this down on paper ... it will be too bloody scary later on'



Cheated out of 30 years or more: Barbara Birchall with her grandchild and the letter she wrote about the horror of unknowingly carrying her own death sentence

This is the letter Barbara Birchall, 56, wrote from her adoptive home in Australia to her family in Lancashire. She had just been told she had mesothelioma, caused by working with blue asbestos more than 30 years previously, and had only a year to live. Last Wednesday, aided by the Oldham solicitor John Pickering, she won £110,000 damages from her erstwhile employers. But her health is sadly and irreversibly failing.

June/July 1997

Dear Family,
Hi, this letter will be mixed up more than usual. I don't let my thoughts connect. It's all happened so fast. Can't believe it, really. Our Michael says he feels like a mushroom kept in the dark, but so do John and I. How can I have this big hard nasty inside me all this time and not know. Was all mystery pains this? I thought it was just me. How can a thing creep, grow so silently, wrap itself around you, take control over your lung. Then, when it's stronger than you, and only then, it gives you hard pain that never goes away.

to say, I'm in control now. What a bastard - fresh, gritty, sticky, fluffy blue asbestos sits there all so quietly for around 30 years then says, here I am - nasty, strong and deadly.

I have to get this down on paper while my mind is in shock. It will be too bloody scary later on. I need something to fight with to make me strong again. I'm just not ready to give up. I like living, even though we are still in this very bad patch. John and I are nearly there. We have worked so hard. John has done this wonderful bathroom and kitchen all by himself, made that wonderful garden from the tip. And he is in poor health himself. Thank God I know and feel God inside me. I really need him now. But in this world, bad man wins.

I fell over a piece of string outside of Safeway and thought I had pulled my shoulder; not a mark on me. That was 9 May. Three weeks later the pain just won't move. Funny this, I thought, and went to the doctor. My doctor had moved so I had to find a new one. Otherwise maybe I would have gone sooner. But it would have made no difference. Asbestos hides for years, then, wham!

Doctor sent me for X-rays. 19 June, something there, don't know what. Sent for cat-scan for better check, 27 June. Monday 30 June, 6.30pm. I went to see this lady surgeon.

Walked into her office, she came in behind us, we all sat down. I got a form to fill in. She said she would explain my cat-scan, step by step. She put it up under the light and the horror was there before your eyes. I said, "How can you help me?" She gave me a special look and said, gently, "It's too late for you, my dear." I heard John gasp and said, "Can't you cut the whole lung away?" She said, "No, my dear, it's come through your ribs. That's why you have pain all the time." So I said, "Cut all the ribs away." She said, "One cannot live without ribs." All I could think of at that moment was thank God I like her. I could not have borne it if I didn't like the person who said that to me.

We got up and left the office. Someone was waiting for her outside. I squeezed her hand in passing. We got to the car and John broke down. I am just numb. We had to go for a little walk so he could pull himself together to drive us home.

I have to tell my children and my parents who are both alive, in their eighties (I come from a good stock), that I have been cheated out of 30 or more years.

That's thanks to you, Turner Brothers. We worked for you in the fluffy blue snow. You never said it got on your lungs and just lay there for 20 to 30 years. You knew something because you gave us all those X-rays car-

ly on. But no masks, as we had to spit on our fingers to make it stick quick. We were on piecework, remember. I damn you and blue asbestos as it grows like buggery in me.

I went to work at Turner Brothers in my 17th year, 1958. I went there to find work as it was nearer to my home. By September 1962 I felt I had had enough of working not by fair rules. To send out good work you need good material, that meant good rolls off the card machines. Between good work and bad is a big difference. A good roll will run nearly all the way through without a break.

I was a quiet girl and a good worker. The woman on the frames in front of me was a shocking, poor spinner and was getting all the best stuff by bribery. This went on a lot. I felt the bosses knew this but did nothing. This work practice got to me so much I couldn't take it any more. One Thursday morning I went for a fresh job without telling anyone. I got taken on at a catalogue firm. Went into work after lunch, went on to my frames and started work as usual. The leading hand came over and said, "Bill the boss wants to see you in his office." So off I went.

Bill said, "Where the hell have you been?" Then I felt all the rage come pouring out. First I said, "It's all right for you, sat on your arse in this office while

we work our guts out, getting all the shit while the shabby workers get the best. All them backhands and foul play, its just not bloody right."

So my boss said, "OK, so give me some names." Laughing, I said, "No names, I don't snitch. You know who it is all right." I could not stop once I got started, waving my arms around and shouting. I left work the next day as it was Friday.

Gritty, sticky blue asbestos. Three months later, I went back for my job. I sat in this empty room waiting for Bill, feeling a fool as the other job I got was only for the Christmas rush, and he knew. When he saw me, he said, "You have a bloody nerve coming here. What do you want?"

I said, "My old job back. I'm one of your best workers and you know it. I need a job and you need me." I won't repeat what he said. I waited for nearly 20 minutes then he came back and said, "OK."

When I started back I was pleased to find all the runners got moved around week to week. That meant all the good work got shared out now. It had helped to stop all that bribery, so he'd listened to me.

Next Bill said he had got some special stuff for me to spin. They had just got a load in from Rhodesia. Blue asbestos, not white, more sticky, much stronger and tougher. I worked

on this a couple of years then left again to have my babies.

Further down the track I went back to work with the blue asbestos on the so-called leisure shift, 5 till 9pm.

We hit a bad spell in our lives so we decided to emigrate to Australia as we couldn't manage any more as things were.

The rest is history. Never dreamt I would be bringing the blue asbestos with me inside my body to give me pain and horror 30 odd years down the track. Why were we not told about this? Why! Damn you Turner Brothers and NPLC as you are now called.

Now I know that I have blue asbestos mesothelioma and have read up all I can on it. The future seems so hopeless sometimes. It scares me so much - the pain I have already is nothing to what I can expect. I have just been for 12 treatments of radiotherapy and it's a scary feeling. The side effects and the misery and suffering one gets just from this is not what I expected. But I shall not give up without a fight, even if it takes all the strength I have. I just wish I could take the horror out of my mind as I cannot stop thinking about it and neither can my husband and family.

You also lose some of your friends as they don't know how to act around you and you feel so full of pain and anguish. Not a nice way to live, is it?



DR PHIL HAMMOND

What's going on? I've got a friend with kidney failure who decided he didn't want a transplant ...

When I was training to be a GP I changed a patient's tablets to a better brand. Well, they were cheaper. But it was the same generic drug, and the tablets were the same colour and shape. He came back a few days later. "Doctor, those tablets you gave me weren't the same." "What do you mean?" "Well, the first lot sank when I threw them down the toilet, and these ones floated."

It came as quite a shock at the time. But I consoled myself that he was a rare eccentric, and that the vast majority of my flock followed the doctor's orders. In fact, for chronic illnesses, the best estimate is that only half of all patients take their medicines in sufficient doses for them to be therapeutically effective - even for potentially life-threatening diabetes, epilepsy, asthma, leukaemia and high blood pressure. Indeed, according to one study, failure to take immunosuppressive medication is the commonest cause of kidney transplant failure. The costs of "non-compliance" in unnecessary disease, premature death and a waste of scarce health resources is staggering.

So what's going on? I've got a friend with kidney failure who decided not to go on the waiting-list for a transplant. "I looked into the side-effects of the drugs I'd have to take and decided it wasn't for me. Basically, the immune system of the rest of your body is completely clobbered to stop this foreign kidney being rejected. You feel like shit and you pick up every bug going. I see people on dialysis whose kidney transplants have failed, and I'm sure no one explained to them how horrible the drugs would be. It doesn't surprise me they don't take them."

Mark prefers to have dialysis, but even then he won't accept the whole package. "I'm supposed to have it three times a week, but sometimes I'll just do it twice. Other patients are on 12 different types of drugs to keep them going - they come in with bloody great carrier bags full of the things, and they look like death. Then the staff do blood tests and say things like: "Oh, your phosphate's really good", as if that's supposed to make up for it. They're so obsessed with their blood tests, they can't see the whole patient."

Mark takes only one of the many drugs he's been prescribed ("erythropoietin - the expensive one. I tried without it and my haemoglobin went down to seven) and he lets the staff take blood off him only once every three months. He ignores much of his strict diet and often trebles his daily 750ml fluid allowance. "Try limiting yourself to that. It's purgatory." He says he looks and feels better than anyone else in the unit. "You'd think the doctors would be interested in how I manage it, but they just get anxious and bolshie if you don't do it their way. When I first had dialysis, the nurse tried to add heparin to the blood to thin it. But I'd read that if you have heparin over a long period it increases your risk of osteoporosis. So I refused it. She got in a flap about how my blood would clog up the machine, so I had to be very firm with her. And did my blood clot? That's because I eat a healthy diet, drink what I want and don't stuff myself with their drugs."

A few years ago, non-compliance meant that you couldn't open the child-proof container (or couldn't find a child to do it for you), you couldn't afford to pick up the prescription, you couldn't remember to take it four times a day on a full stomach but avoiding dairy products or you found the side-effects so unpleasant that you returned apologetically to the doctor as if it was somehow your fault. True, there were always some patients who couldn't be arsed to do what they were told, but usually they wouldn't bother going to the doctor in the first place.

Mark, however, represents a new breed of patient willing to gather information about his treatment options and challenge the established wisdom of medicine from a position of strength. His arguments are part science, part belief and part bloody-mindedness, but it's sad that so many doctors should find this approach irritating and threatening. Why should you do what we tell you? "Doctor knows best" doesn't work any more. "Doctor and patient listen to each other's beliefs and feelings, negotiate a plan of action and monitor it together" isn't so catchy, but it's the only way forward.

Lice, damned lice and statistics

Herbal remedies are increasingly popular in the treatment of head lice, but are they any more effective, or safer, than the conventional cures, asks Cheryl Hicks

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Herbal remedies for head lice are fast becoming popular. Oils such as rosemary, tea tree and lavender are catching on among the trendier middle classes, concerned over the possible side-effects of insecticides found in some head lice lotions sold over the counter.

But some doctors are growing anxious about this trend, pointing out that herbal remedies, too, can have adverse effects.

John Simpson, chair of a national working party on head lice, says that none of the herbal remedies has been tested in clinical trials and that concentrated or essential oils could have toxic side-effects. "Rosemary is already known to trigger uterine contractions and miscarriage," he points out. "Just because something is natural doesn't necessarily mean it is safe. These oils are used in high concentrations, and we don't know enough about their toxicity."

Christine Steward, president of the National Institute of Medical Herbalists, is scathing in her response. "It's a joke, when you consider that they are putting pesticides on children's heads," she says.

Ms Steward, who favours a mix of rosemary, lavender, eucalyptus and geranium oils for head lice, concedes that essential oils should always be diluted rather than used neat on the

skin because some are irritants. Nor should more powerful oils such as thyme be used.

"You have to be careful what you are doing, but used properly the oils are fine," she says. "I know there have



Nit-picking: some people still prefer old-fashioned head lice cures

been no clinical trials, but many of these oils are known to have antimicrobial properties."

Rinsing a child's hair in rosemary tea will also deter lice from crossing from one head to another, she adds.

So what should parents do if they sus-

pect an infestation? First, relax: head lice rarely cause serious health problems, although they can itch horribly. And forget about any social stigma associated with poor hygiene: lice have no preference for either clean or dirty hair.

For a firm diagnosis, comb wet hair with a fine-tooth comb, working carefully downwards from the top of the head and round. The presence of a live louse - colour grey-brown, and about the size of a sesame seed - is unmistakable; nits (the dead egg cases, which go white after hatching) are not.

There is more than one treatment option. Chemical head lice lotions, available in chemists, contain either malathion, an organophosphate, carbaryl (now regarded as a potential human carcinogen, and available on prescription only) or pyrethroids such as permethrin. All these have been shown to be effective in clinical trials, although resistance can build up; two applications are usually needed, one week apart, to allow for any unhatched lice.

But could they be toxic? Among farmers, organophosphates have been linked to symptoms such as chronic fatigue, memory loss and flu-like symptoms such as sweating and dizziness. Research has also shown, rather alarmingly, that if a child is treated with 0.5 per cent malathion lotion - the normal solution - the amount absorbed is

above that absorbed by protected insecticide workers.

However, this is still well below acute toxicity levels, and malathion is quickly metabolised by the liver and excreted in the urine. Reassuringly, trials on adult volunteers of a single application 10 times normal strength did not cause any adverse effects.

The risks associated with the recommended dose of malathion are thought to be very low. More worrying is when parents continually treat their children with insecticides, or use them at intervals of less than a week, which can increase the risk of side-effects.

Those who opt for a herbal treatment should dilute it in a carrier oil such as sunflower or almond oil, rather than use it direct on to the skin. The solution should be rubbed into dry hair and the head towel-wrapped for an hour, before washing out.

A third method of eliminating head lice is known to have absolutely no side-effects. Called "bug busting", it involves using shampoo, conditioner, a special comb - and a fair amount of patience - to break the life cycle of the lice. Although there have been no trials of this method, many have reported success. Treatment packs are available from chemists; or ring Community Hygiene Concern on 0181-341 7167 for more details.

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Stake out the centre, by all means, but don't call it radical



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Our way of governing inevitably encourages governments to try to be all things to all people. To complain that Tony Blair is preacherman one day and chairman of UK plc the next misunderstands the nature of leadership in a democracy. Hypocrisy, to coin a phrase, is the tribute that elective self-government pays to pluralism.

Yet Mr Blair turns out to be less accomplished in this respect than his Chancellor, who today is presenting his Green Budget. Gordon Brown will be playing simultaneously to galleries at home, in his party and overseas. To date he has been remarkably successful in retaining his "left-wing" credentials (thanks in part to impassioned rhetoric on key themes at party and other conferences), while reveling in the drier-than-dry and "Iron Chancellor" epithets that go down well on the trading floors (we prefer "Iron Laddie", which is what one tabloid cheekily called him yesterday).

Only naive observers would ask the real Gordon Brown to stand up please. Our

question is why he feels the need to harp on his socialist credentials when he and his master have clearly decided that Labour's electoral future lies in keeping the wide middle ground of British politics that it captured so surely in the May election. That, in turn, must entail years more of present policy: no tax increases and strict spending control.

It's easy to see why. The Government promised that it would be radical, because that is how Messrs Blair and Brown would like to think of themselves. But they also promised that they would be prudent, because they like to think that about themselves too – and would certainly like others to see them that way. Right now they look very prudent, and very middle ground, and very self-assured in the glow of their middle-ground adulation. And the hard reality is, you can't look or feel radical at the same time as you stroke and soothe the middle ground. Radical means change, and change upsets people. Without upsetting someone, some day, somewhere (and that

means people who matter, not rich potential donors), you can't be radical.

Labour won partly because of Gordon Brown's promise to stick with the aggregate spending limits set down by the Tories. Nothing Labour has encountered in power – no previously hidden fiscal fact – justifies departing from it. It is a matter of confidence, which goes far beyond the putative need to keep money-shifters in the City sweet. Of course Labour ministers, let alone backbench MPs, want to spend. But Gordon Brown needs to remind his colleagues today that they have a rendezvous with their party's destiny. Labour may suffer from false historical recollection of prodigality. Denis Healey's efforts at spending control during the Callaghan government should not be forgotten. But New Labour in power is determined to expunge for ever its reputation as a bad manager of the nation's finances. Good for it.

After all, it is still true that many public services could be more effectively and efficiently provided. From the police to de-

fence, from social security to shop inspection, there remains, too often, a painful gap between what the system thinks it is paying for and the service the public gets.

But there are two services where the case for some more in 1998-99 is hard to reject. Savings are there to be made in the way doctors and hospitals operate. But the National Health Service faces short-run difficulties in financing its work, and growing waiting lists for surgery are a ready sign and symbol. Their parallel in schools – growing class sizes – contradicts Labour's ambition to make educational improvement this administration's badge of attainment. Gordon Brown could assent to more – but only on condition the money is found by other ministers.

That in turn means they all put their shoulders to the door outside which public servants are clamouring for more pay. With certain exceptions (such as teaching) the remuneration of public servants is not a barrier to recruitment. By controlling public service pay Gordon Brown gets some

leeway for education and patient care; the rest of his money has to come from other budgets.

Including social security. Harriet Harman has a convincing tale to tell about the exigencies of power, including sticking with the cut in lone parent premium assumed in Kenneth Clarke's spending plans. Perhaps because of backbench rumblings, Labour's leadership has so far been neatly-mouthed. It is precisely in distancing Labour from interest groups (such as the poverty lobby) that its political future lies. This cut is a weighty and necessary symbol of that.

Labour wants to win the next election. The question for Messrs Brown and Blair ought to be, why? What for? Is this less-than-radical Government laying the ground for a radical second term (in which case, it can be excused present stringencies), or is it merely a vehicle for consolidation and compromise? Upon the answer turns, not only Labour's approach to spending, but the future for radical politics.

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LETTERS

Food agency

Sir: The possibility that the Food Standards Agency could be prevented from looking at issues of nutrition is a worrying development ("Food lobby jeopardises drive for healthy eating", 24 November).

To rational and concerned citizens, the expected role of our much-needed food watchdog must be to look at the related questions of quality, purity and nutrition and to make representations on our behalf to government and manufacturers alike on these issues.

Just where would the (artificial) line between the issues be drawn? By way of example, many asthma sufferers appear to be allergic to bread made from North American wheat, which is used predominantly in our bread, but not to many types of bread made with European flour. Is this a question of purity, because of the anti-fungicide added to North American wheat before shipping; is the allergy caused by something which our own bakers add, or by different types of grain; or should we look at the volume of bread in our national diet? Questions of food quality and nutrition inevitably overlap – and why should they not be looked at together?

The politicians and their civil servants at the ministries of Health and Agriculture will still have responsibility for blocking or implementing any legislative changes recommended by the FSA – but at least give the new agency a sporting chance to carry out the citizens' watchdog role which our ministerial representatives (of whichever political hue) have sadly failed to deliver.

MAYA KRAUS
Director
Guildford Natural Health Centre
Guildford, Surrey

US welfare system

Sir: Polly Toynbee's interesting analysis of welfare in Wisconsin (24 November) is, as she points out, based on a state with a well-known reputation for liberal attitudes and one where there is as close to full employment as you might find anywhere in the United States.

The real problem emerges

in other states, often in the South, without a history of sympathetic attitudes to "welfare mums". There, perhaps, the opportunity to cut funds, save money and demonise those on welfare will be upmost in the minds of those who administer the service. Wisconsin will use the escape hatch, if necessary, of exemption from the five-year limit, but can we be so sure this will happen elsewhere?

Costs will rise dramatically in the short-term (through making available childcare, retraining etc) in order to "save" money later, as people develop the necessary skills to gain work and fend for themselves. However, this reform is occurring at a time of high employment across the United States. Come the economic downturn, the pressure to keep public spending under control will intensify and a different picture could emerge,

with many state legislatures deciding that money could be better spent elsewhere. After all, Charles Murray, one of the Right's leading thinkers, has advocated the building of state orphanages to cater for the offspring of irresponsible mothers.

If new "responsible" attitudes cannot be inculcated into absentee fathers and errant females when times are good, I would not be confident that, in the end, a lot will have changed for the better. The possibility exists of a future of Dickensian misery for those at the bottom of the social hierarchy. At the very least, the federal government should monitor, through information technology, this experiment in social engineering.

RICHARD DE ZOYSA
Senior Lecturer
Division of Politics
South Bank University
London SE1

Genetic engineering

Sir: In the present political climate, where we are constantly beseeched not to tolerate bullying – in the workplace, in the home, in the school – and are given endless instructions on how to deal with it when it arises, it is ludicrous to find ourselves being force-fed food we don't want by people on another continent ("Genetically-modified food to hit shelves in the New Year", 20 November).

You say that UK supermarkets "have been forced to accept [genetically-modified food] by the superior financial muscle of US food producers". Why is such bullying necessary? Good, wholesome, nutritious food will sell on its own merits. The refusal by biotechnology companies to segregate, to identify, to make traceable and to take responsibility for the gene-manipulated foods they are forcing us to swallow, is

clear evidence that they know their produce is inferior and dangerous.

GEORGE STIDOLPH
Scottish Consumers Association for Natural Food Glasgow

Sir: For a technology which is purported to be able to feed the world (report, 20 November), genetic engineering has already had some spectacular failures.

Genes have been shown to escape into wild plants and transfer weedkiller resistance; beneficial creatures, such as bees, have been unexpectedly damaged; and engineered bacteria have poisoned soil fungi and plants. We cannot predict all the consequences, so why we are using it as an experiment which puts our health at risk?

MARTIN HUGHES-JONES
Green Party Agriculture Working Group
Tiverton, Devon

Cut down on cars

Sir: James Cadle (Letters, 22 November) is wrong to suggest that cars are not a principal element of the environmental crisis, at least as far as Britain is concerned. He makes the common mistake of assuming that the crisis is one of pollution. Certainly, pollution and health issues have been used to dramatise the problem, but they are secondary issues.

A primary issue is the unsustainable consumption of fossil fuels and the resulting global warming. Only cars that run on renewable energy would contribute to the avoidance of that problem.

Second, cars are such inefficient users of space that, to accommodate them and the spread-out development pattern which they lead to, we have wrecked a great deal of the countryside and allowed the destruction of our towns

and cities through congestion. Bus services have been rendered inefficient and walking has been made unpleasant and dangerous.

No modifications to car technology can address these problems, and so our objective should be to reduce car usage.

ALAN TAYLOR
London SE24

Beard count

Sir: In support of the Rev Peter Hutton (Letters, 13, 19 November), I note from my Concordance that, whilst there are no less than 20 references to beards in the Old Testament, there are none whatsoever in the New Testament.

Perhaps, as a mark of celebration of 2000 years of Christianity, our bewhiskered political and religious leaders could undertake a sponsored shave-in? BRYAN ROOK
Tring, Hertfordshire

War graves in Burma

Sir: RA Cooper (Letters, 20 November) is misinformed about holidays in Burma. The "holidays" are in fact pilgrimages, the prime object of which is to enable relatives and friends of those killed in Burma to visit graves in the war cemeteries. The visits are well-conducted, solemn and moving occasions.

The only people who are given major financial help are war widows on their first visit to their husband's grave. That assistance comes largely from government funds. Everyone else pays their own way so there is no great drain on the Poppy Appeal.

Finally I must point out that the Poppy Appeal is one of the best-run charities in Britain, with a smaller percentage of income going on administration than most other charities.

R J FARREN
Horsham, West Sussex

Opera budget

Sir: It is extraordinary for Derek Deane, the artistic director of English National Ballet, to make such strong allegations of waste against the Royal Opera House (20 November) without citing examples of such extravagance and without any knowledge of Royal Ballet budgets.

Like ENB, our opera and ballet companies both work to tight budgets and they have accepted salary freezes, redundancies and massive budget cuts in order to break even. They share the same aims: to offer best quality entertainment within available resources.

KEITH COOPER
Director of Sales and
Broadcasting
Royal Opera House
London WC2

Yew of little faith

Sir: Is it any wonder that so many churches in this country are in decline when some of the clergy still give public credence to pagan superstitions belonging to the dark ages? Fr Victor Stock, shown in your picture of the topping-out ceremony at the new Sadler's Wells theatre (21 November), should have discarded his piece of yew, taken his cue from the building worker J S Hunda Singh, and put his faith in prayer!

PETER BANKS
Telford, Shropshire

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The silence of the (off) lamb: a guide to English restaurant etiquette



MILES KINGSTON

"The English are very good at grumbling, but very bad at complaining," said restaurateur Enzo Appicella once.

What did he mean by that? Luckily, I was in his presence when he said it, so I could ask him to explain himself.

"Well," he told me, "I know from having run restaurants for many years that the English hate to come to the management with their complaints. They will mutter at the table about how badly cooked, or cold, or inferior, their food is, and they will go on muttering and whingeing, and they will show their displeasure by not coming back but the one thing they will not do is cause a fuss by complaining out loud there and then."

"Isn't that nice for you?" I said. "Doesn't it avoid involving you in unpleasant scenes?"

"No, it is not nice for me," he said. "If something is wrong, I want to know

about it. I don't want people to depart in silence and never come back. I want people to complain more! Otherwise I may never discover what is wrong."

I think he is right. I think as a people the British – all of us – are nervous of complaining vociferously. We mean but we do not have the courage of our moaning. We would often rather leave the food untouched and have the plate taken away than make any comment. I think I have only once in my life sent a bottle of wine back, and it was quite justified because it was horribly sour and sharp. The waiter took it away in a flash and brought another one. It tasted exactly the same.

"Fine," I said, nodding him to pour away.

Well, I couldn't send back two bottles in a row, could I? I'm English, aren't I?

The only time I can remember being in a restaurant where complaint became

vocal was 10 years ago or more in York, in a very posh restaurant, which I am sure has been wonderful ever since then but which that night served a lamb dish in which the lamb meat was beyond doubt dangerously past its eat-by date. At first you don't believe that you have been served something so poisonous – you think that maybe it is meant to taste like this – but I was finally pushed by increasing nausea to complain to the waitress and was amazed to hear a chorus from nearby tables of: "Yes, mine's off too," and "I'm glad somebody else thinks it's off!"

About half the diners, it turned out, had ordered that dish and everyone had been thinking independently that there was something wrong with it. Nobody had liked to complain. But as soon as someone did complain, it opened the floodgates of communal displeasure, and the whole dining room became friends, united by this

bond of rebellion. I can even remember swapping addresses with the couple at the next table, though needless to say we never got in touch again. We are British, after all.

(I say that the whole dining room became friends. This is not quite true. There was an elderly man in the corner with his mistress who was, as far as we could tell, a judge, and was clearly very drunk, so drunk that he remained completely unaware of the uprising going on around him, and also oblivious to the way in which everyone was listening to his conversation with the equally plastered girlfriend.)

At one point one of us dared to ask her if her main course was all right. She blinked and said it was some of the best chicken she had ever eaten. The judge said: "I thought you were having steak dear." She said: "Am I? Oh, yes, so I am!"

and they went off into peals of laughter and retreated back into their own private drunken world ...)

Needless to say, this accident-prone meal is fondly remembered by my wife and myself where other better meals have faded, in the same way that you remember that picnic with the wasps and the ants more clearly than all the others; and in the same way that we British remember the ignominious débacle of Dunkirk more than almost any other event in the Second World War.

I have suddenly remembered that this article was going to be a cold, hard analysis of my current complaints, which are about waterproof hats and mobile phones. Tomorrow in a very unEnglish way I shall tell you how I became an ex-Orange mobile phone user, and how I wish I had an address to send my Driza-Bone hat back to.

21/COMMENT

Why the Asian model has gone off the road



DIANE COYLE
ON YAMAICHI SECURITIES

The collapse of Yamaichi Securities, one of Japan's biggest stockbrokers, is anything but a surprise. Seriously ailing for at least three years and loss-making since 1991, its official bankruptcy is a merciful release. The Japanese authorities should have put it out of its misery long ago. The fact that they did not, and indeed allowed it to disguise the extent of its financial difficulties for so long, justifies a damning verdict of Asian-style capitalism.

The same verdict applies to South Korea, now reluctantly applying to the International Monetary Fund for an emergency loan because the majority of its big banks are technically bankrupt. The government has used the financial system to channel funds to the huge industrial conglomerates, the *chaebol*, which used the apparently limitless supply of cheap funds to expand into frankly unprofitable activities.

Throughout much of Asia, banks and finance houses have over the decades provided the ammunition for big companies' conquest of an ever-increasing share of world markets. It has long been fashionable in some quarters in the West to praise extravagantly the long-termism of the Japanese financial system, in contrast to the disloyalty and greed supposedly displayed by shareholders in Western companies in their hunt for a quick profit. After all, the financial support from banks that have made long-term loans and bought shares in their client companies accounts, for example, for the dominant Japanese and, lately, Korean position in the manufacture of cars and consumer electronics. This achievement, the argument goes, could never have been achieved if the corporations had been forced to deliver a short-term profit to shareholders.

But the new crisis should finally lay to rest this unquestioning worship of Asian values. The long-term relationships between banks and corporate borrowers have turned out to be a cover for cronyism at best, crime and corruption at worst. These evils have been a common factor in each of the countries afflicted by financial crisis this year: from tiger cubs Malaysia and Thailand, through Indonesia, to industrial giants Korea and Japan.

Anglo-Saxon market values make for a more resilient economy. To see this, go back to the roots of Japan's troubles in the late 1980s. The boom in property and share prices gave Yamaichi and other financial institutions record profits in 1989. The bursting of the bubble plunged them into loss within a couple of years as the massive loans they had made, secured on shares and real estate, turned bad.

A swathe of lenders specialising in property should have gone under almost immediately, but it was not until the end of 1994 that two credit unions collapsed. Only a handful of other small banks and brokers have been closed and taken over since. It

is only now that analysts see in yesterday's announcement about Yamaichi Securities a signal that Japan's Ministry of Finance will undertake brutal surgery to restore the financial system to health.

Contrast the much tougher approach the American authorities took to the "savings and loan" crisis. This too had its roots in excessive lending secured on the fragile base of soaring property prices in the late Eighties. It also involved widespread fraud and cover-ups by these local banks. The US banking regulators were not in a position to resist market pressures, and promptly set up the Resolution Trust Company, a taxpayer-funded body, to cover the bad debts and swiftly closed the duff savings and loans. In the end it cost under \$20bn in tax dollars, far less than initial fears. And the US economy has been going from strength to strength for at least the past four years.

By preserving the network of long-term financial relationships, rather than taking similar brutal and early action, the Japanese government is going to have to ask its taxpayers for a much larger amount to rescue the country's financial system. According to Steven Bell, head of research at the investment bank Deutsche Morgan Grenfell: "The US institutions and the US economy are now very healthy, whereas the Japanese economy has been the most disappointing performer during the 1990s." And Keith Skeoch, director of research at HSBC Investment Bank, says: "The Japanese model has very little to recommend it."

Although there is no sign of an end to its recession, it would be a mistake to overdo the gloom about Japan. While the financial system has not reformed during the past decade, the big corporations have steadily extricated themselves from the banks' fatal embrace. Japanese multinationals, like their American or European counterparts, now meet their financial needs from the global capital markets. Japan is still a powerful and rich economy with a huge industrial base, and the future of companies such as Nissan and Sony is not under threat.

The outlook for South Korean industry is bleaker. Its conglomerates are likely to be severely damaged by the withdrawal of bank credit, as the IMF restructures the country's financial system. Korean companies will have to pull in their horns. The same goes for the smaller East Asian countries, where business activity is similarly dependent on having contacts in the banks. But whatever the various prospects, the real lesson of the Asian crisis is that the vaunted system of long-term links between banks and business, so much admired by Western critics of home-grown capitalism, has failed.

It is a lesson that applies to another system much admired for its long-termism. German banks are also famed for backing the companies which they support financially through thick and thin. Like their Japanese equivalents, they too have been able to exploit unpublished hidden financial reserves to disguise the true costs of doing so.

This has been fine as long as good times have followed bad. But rigid long-term structures are a burden, not a benefit, at times of fundamental economic change. And change, above all, characterises the late 20th century. Free markets, despite their faults and imperfections, make wiser investments. Bankers spend years playing golf, having dinner and exchanging presents with company executives they might have known since their schooldays. The virtue of markets is that their judgements are not distorted by personal sentiment – or bribery. In the face of today's huge technical, demographic and social changes, capitalism in its flexible, free-wheeling Anglo-Saxon variety is coming into its own.

Want to close the class gap? Try taxing the rich when they're dead



DONALD MACINTYRE
INHERITANCE TAXES

The Royal Family may have just made their most modernising decision yet. By decreeing, after what looks like some initial hesitation, that Princes William and Harry will have to pay up £7m in death duties on Princess Diana's estate, the Queen and the Prince of Wales have at a stroke exposed what may prove to be one of the few truly ideological issues left at the end of the 20th century: taxation of inherited wealth. By rejecting an entirely legal scheme to avoid paying the tax – transfer of the assets into a trust for the two Princes – they have chosen to stump up what anyone this rich with the savvy to employ a tax lawyer and/or accountant knows is one of those taxes you just don't need to pay. And in the long run they may have taken a more significant – and entirely welcome – step in making the case for inheritance tax than they realise.

That isn't, of course, how everyone will see it. The most enjoyable weekend remark on the saga was from the anonymous tax lawyer who told the *Sunday Telegraph*: "What might be perfectly acceptable for an ordinary family with a very

large estate might not be acceptable for this particular family." There is a pleasing subtext of underlying panic here: good grief, we don't want this kind of thing catching on. If the Royal Family behave like this, all sorts of people could start paying inheritance tax. And how then would we earn our money? But he's right, of course. All those "ordinary families with very large estates" will continue avoiding inheritance tax; until, that is, something is done to make it a good deal more difficult to do so.

Which is what quite a lot of people, possibly including those advising the Royal Family, thought Gordon Brown would announce in his Green Budget today. Whether or not this was one of the reasons why the Royal Family recently considered the trust option – before rejecting it – the personal finance and business pages of the newspapers have for the past few weeks been full of stories that Brown would use his Commons statement today to start closing the biggest inheritance tax loopholes. These reports were fuelled by those who make a living setting up avoidance schemes. It's always good for business if you can frighten potential customers with a cut-off point. And no doubt quite a few wealthy people were gullible enough to set up trusts to beat the alleged deadline.

As it happens, the Chancellor isn't going to make any such announcement today. Nor would he, whatever he intended to do in the March budget. Significantly, he will emphasise, in general terms, that the very rich, as opposed to middle Britain, are currently, and unacceptably, free to avoid taxes of all kinds. But as every ex-Chancellor knows, to give five

months' notice of a tax measure like this would indeed trigger a wholesale flight by the wealthy into every possible avoidance scheme – legal and perhaps not so legal. Which leaves open between now and spring the question of whether or not Gordon Brown, having heavily attacked avoidance of inheritance tax before the election, now intends to reinforce and expand the coverage of the tax next March. Will he? And should he?

The answer to the first question is "probably"; to the second "certainly". Let us nevertheless first consider the counter-case. The Conservatives didn't do much to make more people pay inheritance tax because, with the possible exception of Kenneth Clarke, they didn't believe in it. Indeed, in the 1992 manifesto, they even committed themselves to eventual abolition of both inheritance and capital gains tax. The ostensible argument most frequently used was that wealth should "cascade down the generations" and that the honourable desire to pass on your accumulated fortune to your children was part of what encouraged you to make money in the first place – a positive motor of the economy.

Partly, however, I blame that Friedrich Hayek. The guru of the right helped to lend the cause of abolishing what is after all the most painlessly redistributive of taxes a kind of respectability. In a distinctly weird passage of his 1960 book *The Constitution of Liberty*, Hayek used other arguments in favour of untaxed inheritance: such as that parents denied the opportunity of passing on riches to their children would be more likely to use unreasonable influence to lever them into well-paid jobs (something

which in a properly meritocratic society would anyway be impossible), and – most breathtakingly of all – that inheriting wealth makes you behave better; according to Hayek "the grosser pleasures in which the newly rich often indulge have usually no attraction for those who have inherited wealth". (Sadly, Friedrich was writing too early to enjoy the daily doings of minor aristocrats, Eurotrash and businessmen's brats in the Nigel Dempster column.)

But not everyone on the right agrees. You can talk to brighter Tories who see all this for the bunkum it is. In particular they point out that if a more dynamic, entrepreneurial society is what you're after, it makes little sense to create a new generation of rich layabouts who don't need to work. Inheriting wealth is a rather more potent disincentive, perhaps, than the allegedly dreadful prospect of having your assets over £215,000 (the present threshold) taxed at 40 per cent at the point of your death would be. In other words, so far from inheritance tax being an obsolete instrument of the politics of envy, it helps to underpin free enterprise.

But inheritance tax is also an essential component of a fair tax system, particularly when increasing income tax is regarded as less and less com-

patible with winning elections. It's certainly legitimate to examine whether disability benefit only goes to deserving cases. But the corollary is surely that the scams which allow those at the other end of the income scale to avoid paying taxes, including capital taxes such as inheritance tax, have to be outlawed too – whether by buying a farm and working it for just two years or spuriously allowing occasional public visits to your stately home to see a painting or two.

Avoidance isn't everything: there is a strong case, which needs to be built, for extending the scope of the tax. But ending the schemes and wheezes would be a big start. At present £1.5bn is raised each year through the tax. No one, least of all the Inland Revenue, will tell you how much more could be raised if the rich actually paid it. This is one issue about which Tony Blair should be immune to the squealings of the rich and powerful. After all the Royal Family has made it just a little bit less respectable to avoid paying inheritance tax. This is a tax which promotes equality of opportunity and militates against class division. It was Gordon Brown's role model, David Lloyd George, who said that "Death is the most convenient time to tax rich people." It's still true.

If you're homeless or in jail, you probably grew up in care



ANDREAS WHITTAM SMITH
CHILDREN AT RISK

I first realised how serious is the plight of children looked after by local authorities rather than by their families when I chaired an inquiry into youth homelessness. For the largest group of young people who live on the streets, or squat or stay in hostels or in other short-term accommodation, are those who have been in care. As Sir William King's report published last week notes, they comprise 30 per cent of the total.

Young people who have been placed with foster families or in children's homes also account for a sizeable proportion of the prison population – 23 per cent of adult prisoners and 38 per cent of young prisoners. From "care" to a life on the streets or in prison, those who make this passage truly are the excluded from society.

Sir William was asked to focus primarily on physical, sexual and emotional abuse by adults or by other children, but I read his report as a primer on the entire system. What is going wrong? In Victorian times, confronted with such a situation, the first step taken would have been to legislate. But now, over 100 years later, we have an abundance of legislation and official guidance, if not too much.

The Children Act of 1989 introduced a lot of new safeguards. The Act states that the first duty of a local authority to a child in its care is "to safeguard and promote his welfare". In turn the Act has been supplemented with regulations and guidance. Some 14 publications giving detailed advice have been published by the

Department of Health alone in the past three years. Indeed Sir William believes that the amount of regulations, statutory guidance, departmental circulars and letters, reports by inspectors and other reports, is now so large that responsible managers have difficulty in comprehending it all.

The key malfunction is that the instructions, recommendations and good intentions of central government are often disregarded. One reason is an excessively diffuse structure. In England alone, 132 separate social services departments run 836 children's homes; and in addition there are 202 private and 64 voluntary homes. Moreover, the most potent influence on local authority behaviour is the financial pressure under which they work. Because it is seven times more expensive to place a child in a home rather than with a foster family, there is a continuing retrenchment in residential care. There is a preoccupation with keeping occupancy levels as high as possible and some children are shoe-horned into vacancies in unsuitable establishments. Other children are moved from institution to institution, causing fur-

ther upheaval in their development. And yet other children are put into homes far away from their local areas and then forgotten.

Nobody can estimate how much sexual abuse by adults (and by other children) and how much bullying takes place in children's homes, except that it appears to be endemic. At least the fact of the abuse has become well known. Best practice in terms of selecting staff and monitoring them has been made very clear to local authorities in recent years. And now the Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, has set up a ministerial taskforce to deliver a "safer environment" for children. It will have to be a very large, powerful and active taskforce to be effective.

Think about the questions a child being put into the care of his or her local authority could ask. Will I be placed into a children's home if that is more suitable for me than foster care? Answer: maybe. If I am put into a home, will it be suitable for my circumstances? Possibly not. Will I be sexually abused by the staff or by other children or be bullied? There is a definite risk. Will the new taskforce

make any difference? Hardly.

Will I get a good education? Answer: you will be lucky to get any education at all. One government report found that over one third of the children in residential care were not receiving education. Another report discovered that one in four of those aged 14 to 16 were not attending school regularly and many had been excluded and had no regular educational placement. In short, if children are in care, it is assumed that they are "difficult" and schools won't take them. No wonder that 75 per cent of care leavers have no academic qualifications of any kind and that more than 50 per cent are unemployed. Nor, in light of this, is it altogether surprising that many turn to street life or crime.

As 50,000 children are in foster care compared with 10,000 in children's homes, I turned with interest to Sir William's findings. But Sir William is the first to admit that not a lot is known about foster care. As compared with children's homes, little research has been carried out. Policy makers have not thought about fostering much. This is a pity as children in foster

homes tend to be younger than those in children's homes, with 42 per cent of them under 10 years old. Quite a high proportion of them have some form of disability including emotional and behavioural problems. And they are clearly at risk of abuse since they are isolated and because they are young. The saving grace, perhaps, is that much fostering is short-term. The average stay is about 22 weeks.

What is to be done? For once there is an obvious piece of re-organisation that should be carried out, one which would bring about a substantial improvement in the standards of children's homes without raising costs – and which could even produce a saving! It is to make children's homes a national service rather than a local one. Local authorities should continue to be responsible for foster care, where local knowledge is of great importance. But they have shown themselves unfit to run children's homes. Rather than 132 local authorities managing 836 institutions more or less badly, one agency should be responsible. Then, and only then, could standards be raised substantially.

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Stock markets shaken as Yamaichi closure leads to collapse in confidence

In a bid to calm international markets, the Japanese authorities yesterday promised to bail out customers of the ruined brokerage, Yamaichi Securities, but doubts about the stability of the country's financial system overshadowed world stock markets, report Richard Lloyd Parry and Tom Stevenson.

The Ministry of Finance ordered Yamaichi to suspend all but its most routine operations after the company announced early yesterday morning that it was voluntarily closing down.

The Japanese financial markets were closed for a public holiday yesterday, but elsewhere reactions were broadly negative. In London, shares fell sharply in early trade with the FTSE 100 index losing more than 100 points at one stage. The market recovered its poise later in the day, however, after Wall Street appeared to take the Asian turmoil in its stride.

The FTSE 100 closed 87.2 points down at 4898.6 after a day of very thin trading. By the end of trading in London, the Dow Jones index was only 50 points lower but it later moved lower as attention swung to how dealers would react in Tokyo when markets reopened after the long weekend.

Western stock markets focused on the impact the collapse in confidence in the Far East would have on earnings forecasts for companies with a heavy Asian exposure and the worst performers included banks such as Standard Chartered and HSBC. Merrill Lynch said yesterday it thought adverse currency effects, slower economic growth and lower product prices would have a "significant" effect and money poured into perceived safe havens such as utilities.

Others were more bullish, believing the thin volumes seen throughout yesterday's session suggested that the early falls in UK equities were triggered by a markdown rather than any panic selling. The optimistic view sees the Japanese monetary authorities moving to restore investor confidence and global markets staging a swift recovery.

Shares in South Korea, under the cloud of an IMF rescue mission likely to plunge the economy into recession, fell 7 per cent yesterday to an all-time low. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended slightly higher, up 72 points at 10,620.1.

Shohei Nozawa, Yamaichi's president, wept as he made the official announcement after a weekend of crisis meetings failed to come up with any way of saving the company, the fourth-biggest of the Japanese brokerages. "This unexpected situation on our 100th anniversary is heartbreaking, and we don't know how to beg the pardon of our customers, shareholders, and many related people who care for us," the tearful executive told reporters during a press conference at the Tokyo Stock Exchange. "As a representative of the company, I am deeply sorry."

The government's most senior finance officials moved quickly to promise protection to customers of Yamaichi and to bail out other financial institutions facing credit difficulties. Declining stock prices, together with a stagnant economy, have made it much more expensive for Japanese institutions to borrow money on the international markets. It was the decision by Moody's, the American credit rating agency, to downgrade Yamaichi's debt to junk bond status last Friday that effectively sealed the brokerage's fate.

"Every effort will be made to protect the assets of Yamaichi's clients," said the minister of finance, Hiroshi Mitsuoka. "Therefore we strongly urge investors and business clients not to be concerned and to stay calm. Although Yamaichi's net worth is judged positive at this moment, we stand ready to take any appropriate measures to secure the return of clients' assets and to ensure the orderly settlement of existing transactions and positions."

In a separate press conference, the governor of the Bank of Japan (BoJ), Yasuo Mutsushita, announced it would extend unlimited unsecured loans to Yamaichi to protect some 24 trillion yen in client deposits. He said the government would draft legislation intended to increase the size of bail-out funds for banks, insurance companies and brokerages in order to protect against future failures. And, in an attempt to as-

suage fears of further collapses of financial institutions, he declared the BoJ's readiness to take "necessary supportive steps to cope with the risk of unexpected decline in market liquidity".

The Tokyo Stock Exchange will register its reaction this morning when it reopens after a three-day holiday. When Japan's tenth-largest bank, Hokkaido Tokai-Mitsubishi, went bust last week, the Nikkei share average rose on hopes that the failure would help the banking system to flush out the bad debts left over from the collapse of the bubble economy.

The collapse of Yamaichi is a traumatic event unlikely to be greeted so positively. Its collapse is the biggest corporate failure in Japan since the Second World War. Yamaichi employed 7,500 people at 117 domestic branches and more than 30 branches overseas.

The collapse has also exposed once again the seemingly endemic corruption in a financial sector which has promised again and again to clean up its act. Earlier this year, Yamaichi's image was sullied when, along with the other three of the "big four" brokerages, it was implicated in a scandal involving illegal payments to a corporate racketeer. Over the weekend it emerged that the company had been hiding more than 260 billion yen in losses in dummy companies in the Cayman Islands.

The existence of the debts, bigger even than the huge hidden losses racked up by Sumitomo Corporation and the banks, Daiwa and Barings, will complicate the BoJ's mission to bail out the brokerage. The use of public funds to rescue mis-managed companies is highly unpopular among Japanese voters.

The failure by the authorities to detect the losses undermines their credibility and raises the possibility that there are other financial institutions similarly burdened with secret debt. Some analysts detected an ambiguity in the government's promise to protect depositors. Despite promising to extend loans to Yamaichi, the government has yet to commit itself to detailed measures to bolster up the weaknesses in the financial system in general.

Outlook, page 23
Hamish McRae, page 26



The president of Yamaichi Securities, Shohei Nozawa, breaks into tears while answering a question at a news conference in Tokyo yesterday. "This unexpected situation on our 100th anniversary is heartbreaking," he said.

Yamaichi announced it would shut down, setting off a government offensive to assure a nervous world that the failure was not the start of an economic meltdown. Photograph: Kyodo

US rejected Korea's request for finance

South Korea approached the US for emergency financing last week before having to turn to the International Monetary Fund. As Mary Dejevsky reports, the disclosure threatened to embarrass the Americans as they tried to use the summit of Pacific Rim nations in Vancouver this week to restore confidence in the Asian economies.

As the first IMF inspectors started work in Seoul yesterday, South Korea mounted a force-

ful defence of its economic record, seeking to distinguish the underlying strength of its economy from the debilitated state of the other faltering tiger economies.

In what appeared to be a rehearsal of South Korea's position for the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Apec) summit, which opened yesterday, a team of senior South Korean economic officials set out to clarify the reasons why South Korea had called in the IMF.

Leading the team, Kim Ki Whah, ambassador at large for economic affairs, said there had been "insufficient understanding" of current economic conditions in Korea and "inadequate understanding of the background" to the call to the

IMF. He insisted the fundamentals of South Korea's economy were "very sound" and that the government had been largely successful in tackling the country's \$24bn (£14bn) current account deficit.

If the present trend continued, he said, the deficit would be reduced to \$14bn for 1997 - 3 per cent of GDP compared with 5 per cent for last year. This, he said, had been achieved with little effect on overall growth, which was forecast to average 6 per cent for the current year, compared with 7.1 per cent in 1996. Exports were growing strongly, and unemployment, at 2.5 per cent, remained low.

Korea's problems, he said, had been precipitated by a

credit squeeze, which had led to a wave of bankruptcies, and exacerbated by the fall of the Hong Kong stock market, which caused a sharp deterioration in international confidence. The result had been a "very sharp liquidity shortage", but a short-term one.

Initially, the government had thought it could arrange emergency financing to tide the country over "without bothering the IMF".

But, he added: "Korea approached its closest allies, and the universal advice was that Korea should go to the IMF." In other words, although Mr Kim stressed the brevity and informality of the conversations and the tentative nature of Korea's enquiries, the US (per-

haps of likely opposition from Congress) and Japan (probably because of its own economic problems) had turned Korea down.

South Korea's officials expressed confidence that negotiations with the IMF would go smoothly, saying that the IMF remedies would be little different from those already prescribed by the country's own new deputy prime minister and economic supremo.

The measures include the halving of the proportion of Korean banks' non-performing loans, from 6 per cent to 3 per cent of the total, just slightly more than the equivalent percentage in the US; a pruning of financial institutions; and a big widening of the band within

which the value of the Korean currency, the won, may vary against the dollar, from plus or minus 2 per cent to plus or minus 10 per cent.

The government will also undertake to make public statistics for the country's foreign debt.

The pain to Korea of having to call in the IMF was clear from officials' insistence that Korea might not need the full \$20bn in assistance, let alone the additional sums mooted by some analysts.

Despite refusing Seoul's request for assistance, Washington officials at Apec backed South Korea's optimistic prognosis, using it to "talk up" international confidence in the region's economies.

Europe and US wait to see if the spillover effect will dent growth

Now that Japan has fallen victim to the financial crisis rippling through Asia, the spillover effects on the US and Europe will be more pronounced. But, as Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, discovers, the experts are not sure how serious they might be.

On the day when the collapse of Yamaichi Securities gave the clearest sign so far of the scale of the financial crisis in Asia, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) published its authoritative annual report on the US economy. The assessment could not have been more glowing; but other economists warned that the Asian contagion could seriously dent growth in both the US and Europe.

The main channel for any

slowdown as a result of the crisis will be weaker exports to Japan, Korea and the Asian tigers. Not only will their demand for foreign goods shrink, but the exchange rate has also moved markedly in the favour of Asian exporters.

Estimates vary, but this is expected to shave up to half a percentage point from European GDP growth and up to 1 per cent from the US growth rate.

The buoyant state of the American economy offers the rest of the world its best insulation from Asian contagion. The OECD report concludes: "US macroeconomic outcomes continue to be extraordinary. Output growth has reached a new high for this cycle, the unemployment rate has fallen to a level not seen in a generation, and yet inflation shows no signs thus far of reacting to capacity pressures."

The think-tank, which prepared its forecast before the latest developments in Japan and

Korea, predicts US growth of 3.8 per cent this year and 2.8 per cent next. This upbeat outlook suggests the crisis might take the economy back to its trend growth rate in 1998 but not much lower, especially as the Federal Reserve Board is expected to keep interest rates unchanged as long as the uncertainty lasts.

Some European economies are in much a weaker position than the US, and analysts disagree over how serious the impact on them will be. The recovery in France and Germany has been based on exports, and they therefore look more vulnerable to a downturn.

Gerard Lyons, chief economist at DKB in London, argues that the Asian crisis therefore means there is a tendency towards global deflation.

But lower exports are not the only possible spillover. For the UK, one of the biggest worries is whether direct investments by Japanese and Korean compa-

nies will be hit. Although there are many more Japanese-owned plants, they are mostly well-established and in a strong financial position.

However, Korean plants, such as LG's massive £1.7bn investment in South Wales, are thought to be at some risk of being affected by South Korea's impending recession.

Professor Garel Rhys, head of economics at Cardiff University's business school, said: "It could be that LG came to Wales just in time and it could be some time before we see another major Korean investment." The Asian turmoil would continue to affect the financial markets as well as casting a direct shadow over economic prospects outside the region, analysts said.

There will be a dimmer outlook for corporate earnings in sectors either most exposed to competition from South-east Asia or most dependent on exports to the afflicted countries.

Recruitment 'vultures' lie in wait on doorstep of London office

The ambulance chasers from headhunting agencies were yesterday waiting on Yamaichi's doorstep early enough to approach members of the 300-strong staff before they were formally informed that they would soon be out of work.

Even a journalist from a tabloid newspaper was surprised to come across the headhunters that early in the day and called them "vultures".

A representative from Parallel International, the recruitment specialists, said the accusation was "a bit rich" and added that the doorstepping exercise was "very fruitful".

Staff were informed of their fate at a 9am meeting. Departmental heads were later instructed to lay off "non-essential" staff as soon as possible.

A Yamaichi spokesman said around 40 employees had been given redundancy notices, but could not provide further details about the full redundancy timetable. He said: "Everybody will lose their job. It's just a

question of when." It is expected it will take at least six months to wind down all of Yamaichi's London activities.

Yamaichi was unable to say how much redundancy money its employees would receive. But it confirmed that "all contractual bonuses" would be honoured. Of the 300 staff, some 250 are based at Yamaichi International Europe (YIE), its securities house, and the remainder are employed by Yamaichi Bank (UK) Limited, its London-based commercial bank.

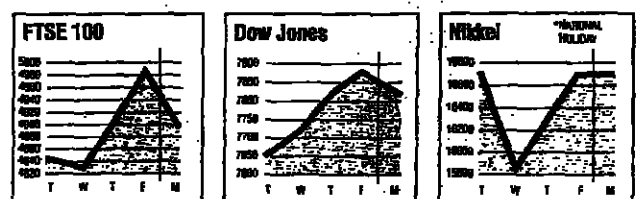
Representatives from Parallel International arrived at YIE's offices at 9am, just as Kenichi Nakajima, YIE's chief executive, was telling staff that they would lose their jobs.

Parallel said it had received "around a dozen calls" from Yamaichi staff.

The firm also confirmed it had made it on to a short list of selected headhunting agencies doing the rounds at Yamaichi's London offices.

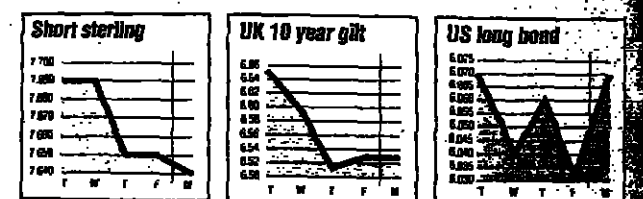
— Lea Paterson

STOCK MARKETS



Indices	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	4898.60	-87.20	-1.75	5367.30	3882.70	3.60
FTSE 250	4845.70	-20.00	-0.43	4953.80	4321.80	3.46
FTSE 350	2363.70	-35.80	-1.49	2670.50	1835.70	3.67
FTSE All Share	2310.99	-33.83	-1.43	2507.68	1942.22	3.56
FTSE SmallCap	2266.1	-12.80	-0.57	2407.40	2127.50	3.35
FTSE RealEstate	1244.4	-6.60	-0.53	1348.50	1198.70	3.40
FTSE AIM	975.7	-6.70	-0.68	1138.00	865.90	1.08
Dow Jones	7818.40	-61.57	-0.78	8298.03	6296.05	1.74
Nikkei	16721.58	-	-	21460.47	14956.13	0.92
Hang Seng	10585.36	38.16	0.36	16820.31	8775.68	4.00
Dax	3830.63	-123.06	-3.26	4458.89	2760.76	2.89

INTEREST RATES



Money Market Rates	3 month	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
UK	7.88	1.26	7.88	0.85	6.53	0.82	6.67
US	5.88	0.38	5.88	0.25	5.3	0.25	5.67
Japan	0.48	-0.02	0.55	-0.09	1.97	-0.73	2.62
Germany	3.75	0.56	4.08	0.77	5.50	-0.31	6.08

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Falls	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg
Alfred Colloids	167.50	41.50	32.94	
London Int'l	155.50	8.00	5.14	
Cable and Wire	827.00	13.50	1.64	
TBI	91.25	2.50	2.82	
London	131.00	12.50	-8.71	
Standard Chart	682.00	-46.00	-6.04	
HSBC Index	7408	-80	-1.07	
Allied Domecq	584	-31	-5.18	

CURRENCIES

£/E

Jan	Feb	Mar
1.6907	1.6711	1.6907

DM/E

Jan	Feb	Mar
2.9351	2.5467	2.9351

Y/E

Jan	Feb	Mar
214.62	188.17	214.62

Pound

Jan	Feb	Mar
1.6907	+0.11c	1.6711

Dollar

Jan	Feb	Mar
0.9815	-0.04c	0.9894

Yen

Jan	Feb	Mar
214.62	+12.07	188.17

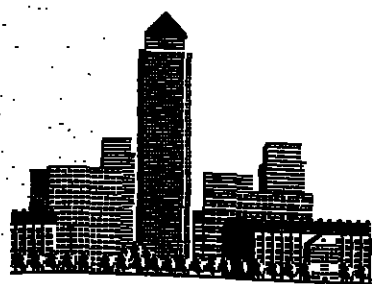
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Jan	Feb	Mar
104.50	+0.20	92.50

OTHER INDICATORS

Commodity	Price	Chg	% Chg	Commodity	Price	Chg	% Chg
Gold (\$)	304.45	-0.60	-0.20	Oil (\$)	18.90	0.12	0.63
Oil (\$)	304.45	-0.60	-0.20	Wheat (\$)	113.90	3.80	3.38
Wheat (\$)	113.90	3.80	3.38	Barley (\$)	159.50	3.7	2.35
Barley (\$)	159.50	3.7	2.35	Base Rates	7.25	6.00	

Source: Bloomberg



OUTLOOK ON JAPAN'S PROBLEMS, WHITEHALL'S ASSETS AND REDLAND'S TACTICS

The Japanese blues are here to stay

Whenever something calamitous happens in the Japanese economy, a string of commentators, generally American and British, invariably come crawling out of the woodwork to opine that it is always darkest just before the dawn, that things can hardly get worse and that the event should therefore be seen not as a reason for giving up on Japan, but as a buying opportunity.

Something like this has been argued in each of the last five years, and it generally causes a little rally in the Nikkei over the summer months, fed by ever hopeful overseas investors. One person unashamedly to have adopted this stance was Ken Courtis, vice-president of Deutsche Bank Capital Markets in Japan and a recognised international guru on the Japanese market. He argued powerfully at the beginning of this year that the worst was over, reform was on the way, and it was time to buy Japan.

This story is recounted not out of the sole purpose of embarrassing Mr Courtis, who in the past has had some good calls on Japan, but by way of warning to those who would see the collapse of Yamaichi as a cathartic experience that will galvanise the Japanese into action and bring about that long awaited bounce in the Nikkei. Unfortunately there is scant evidence of this occurring, and until there is, those who argue that things can only get better are just bottom fishing.

The Japanese Government has not yet committed anything by way of public money even to the business of bailing out the country's insolvent banks, let alone the

massive fiscal stimulus Japan so desperately needs to pull itself out of the doldrums. As our Monday columnist, Gavin Davies of Goldman Sachs, has argued, without this package Japan will limp on for years to come, her already weakened condition made infinitely worse by the collapse of the Asian Tiger economies.

So far equity markets in Europe and the US have proved remarkably resilient to the horrors of the Far East. Having shown unerring signs of crashing in late October, markets have since "un-crashed" and the overall correction in developed economies has been modest. Japan will obviously provide another important test when it begins trading again in the early hours of today after its long three day weekend. But at this stage it is looking as if Armageddon has once more been postponed. For the time being, markets seem happy to dismiss warnings of the export of Japanese deflation into the global economy as alarmist nonsense.

In any case, some good is plainly bound to come out of it all. Markets are forcing the pace of change, exposing and trouncing the corrupt and cronyist practices of these largely protected economies. Aid from the International Monetary Fund to the Tiger economies is coming at a high price in terms of structural reform. Events are plainly moving much more swiftly than the Japanese Government would like, but markets are in fact only imposing the brutal way they often do what official policy is already bent on achieving.

It is always easy to forget in describing

the Japanese economy that it is essentially a tale of two economies. While the protected service, construction and financial sectors have continued to flourish, Japan still has a whole raft of internationally competitive, world class companies (Sony, Toyota, Canon), which have remained immune to the present crisis.

Japan's awakening to reality in its own domestic economy has been a long and difficult one. The real world is proving a rather more brutal than the one Japan has traditionally inhabited. Structural reform may be the only way out for these economies, but the road to salvation is a highly painful one. Certainly it is in itself unlikely to prove conducive to a revival in the Japanese stock market. To most external observers it is obvious that Japan needs to accompany structural reform with a massive fiscal stimulus. Unfortunately, this is by no means obvious to the Japanese Government.

Register is a good start

The Antiques Roadshow collided with Whitehall yesterday and the result, accompanied by plenty of oohing and aahing, was the National Asset Register. This is a 550-page record of everything the Government owns, right down to the last shredding machine, forklift truck, Polaris submarine (one careful owner, end of Cold War forces sale) and Stubbs oil. Alastair Darling, the saturnine Chief Secretary to

the Treasury, makes an unlikely Hugh Sculley. But even he could barely suppress the odd gasp of avaricious excitement as the booty was checked over.

Exhibit One: The old clock that has sat around the Cabinet Office gathering dust for three centuries. Really, £80,000? Well I never. And that's not all. There are 11,000 works of art buried away in Whitehall's books, not to mention regal thrones, 50 museums, 1,300 highland crofts, 1,000 answerphones (all at the DTI apparently), enough bloodstock to fill 10 stud farms, the odd Nelson's Column and the car park next to Ipswich football ground.

Total public spending is running at a shade over £300bn a year. By a handy quirk of fate, the Government's assets are reckoned to be worth about the same. Just think how much more cash Gordon Brown would have to play with, and all of it perfectly legit, if we just sold off one or two bits and pieces from this remaining hoard of family silver.

There are, of course, limits on how much money Whitehall departments would be allowed to raise through sales of unwanted and underutilised assets and you have to wonder how much, if anything, a lot of it would fetch.

But the Register is a handy start at identifying privatisation candidates. More importantly, it marks the first step towards the introduction of conventional resource accounting across Whitehall from 1999 onwards. That will oblige the Government to do all those boring old things that form a part of commercial life, like producing

cash flow statements and separating capital from current accounting. Any improvement in the transparency of the public accounts is obviously a good thing.

Remember what happened to Scott

Redland, the besieged building materials group, is utilising a form of the famous Captain Oates defence (I'm going out, I may be some time), by caving into perceived shareholder pressure and agreeing to eject Robert Napier as chief executive. The idea here is that by jettisoning the man seen as chiefly responsible for the company's dreadful performance in recent years, Redland might convince shareholders to give its other directors the benefit of the doubt and reject Lafarge's hostile £1.67bn takeover bid. As its description implies, deployment of such a defence always smacks a little of desperation.

For a start, there is the ominous fact that Captain Oates's act of self sacrifice didn't in practice work; Scott and the others perished anyway. And for seconds, there is the uncomfortable truth that in collecting a £700,000 payoff as he wanders off into the night for a pee, Mr Napier isn't sacrificing anything. In departing into the storm, he seems to be taking with him the socks, remaining victuals and a couple of sleeping bags to boot. Providing Gallic pride doesn't get the better of Lafarge, and it sweetens its offer a little, the betting must still be with the French.

Thames Water shareholders attack Sir Robert Clarke's pay package

A shareholder rebellion is brewing at Thames Water over the pay package of the group's chairman, Sir Robert Clarke, whose remuneration has been criticised by the Chancellor. Institutional investors say Sir Robert's pay is excessive as he is handing over responsibilities to the recently appointed chief executive. Nigel Cope, City Correspondent, reports.

a fraction of his current salary. Sir Robert was paid £247,000 in the year to March but was awarded a 4 per cent "cost of living" increase in July. One leading shareholder said: "There is an element of principle here as to whether the remuneration committee is really doing its job. I believe institutions should make a stand."

Some investors feel Sir Robert is "hanging on" as executive chairman even though Bill Alexander was recently promoted to chief executive. They said Sir Robert's increased pay was justified when he was fulfilling the role of acting chief executive but should have fallen following Mr Alexander's appointment.

Another shareholder said: "You have to question whether the board is acting in the best interests of shareholders. If they want a chairman to stay on until he retires I don't see why

he should get more than, say, £100,000."

Thames Water defended its decision to retain Sir Robert as executive chairman on full pay even though a full-time chief executive had been appointed to replace Michael Hoffman. He left the group 18 months ago after a disastrous diversification policy.

A spokesman said: "What we have got is a strong central team that is delivering results in the utilities business and the non-regulated operations. There is still a role for Sir Robert."

The company denied that an 18-month handover was excessive and said Sir Robert was doing a full, five-day week.

"We feel this is in the best interests of shareholders and neither we nor our brokers have heard from any investors."

However, the company hopes to defuse the situation by contacting its top 10 institu-

tional investors. These include Chase Manhattan, Franklin Resources, MAM, Sun Life, Standard Life, Legal & General and Prudential.

Some institutions have drawn attention to Sir Robert's poor record in his executive position at United Biscuits, the McVities snacks group. During his four-year tenure as chief executive from 1986, United Biscuits shares underperformed the market badly. In the following five years, when he was chairman, they underperformed by more than 30 per cent.

Thames Water provoked the ire of Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, this month when he learned that Sir Robert was to enjoy a pay rise even though his responsibilities were diminishing. The chancellor said he would not tolerate a "new round of boardroom irresponsibility" in the privatised utilities.

Smiths chairman's retirement sparks GEC speculation

Sir Roger Hurn is today expected to announce his retirement as chairman of Smiths Industries, heightening speculation that he will become the next chairman of the GEC defence and electronics giant.

Shareholders attending Smiths' annual meeting at its North-west London headquarters will be told that Sir Roger intends to step down after 29 years with the group, the last six of them as chairman.

However, there will not be an announcement either from GEC or Smiths about where he

is going although his appointment to the chairman's job at GEC in succession to Lord Prior now looks increasingly like a formality. "He has the right background, he has the experience in defence and he is well respected. Everything seems to fit," said one source.

Sir Roger has been tipped to take over at GEC for some months. However, his present £719,000-a-year contract at Smiths does not run out until November next year, at which point he can leave with three months' notice. GEC needs to

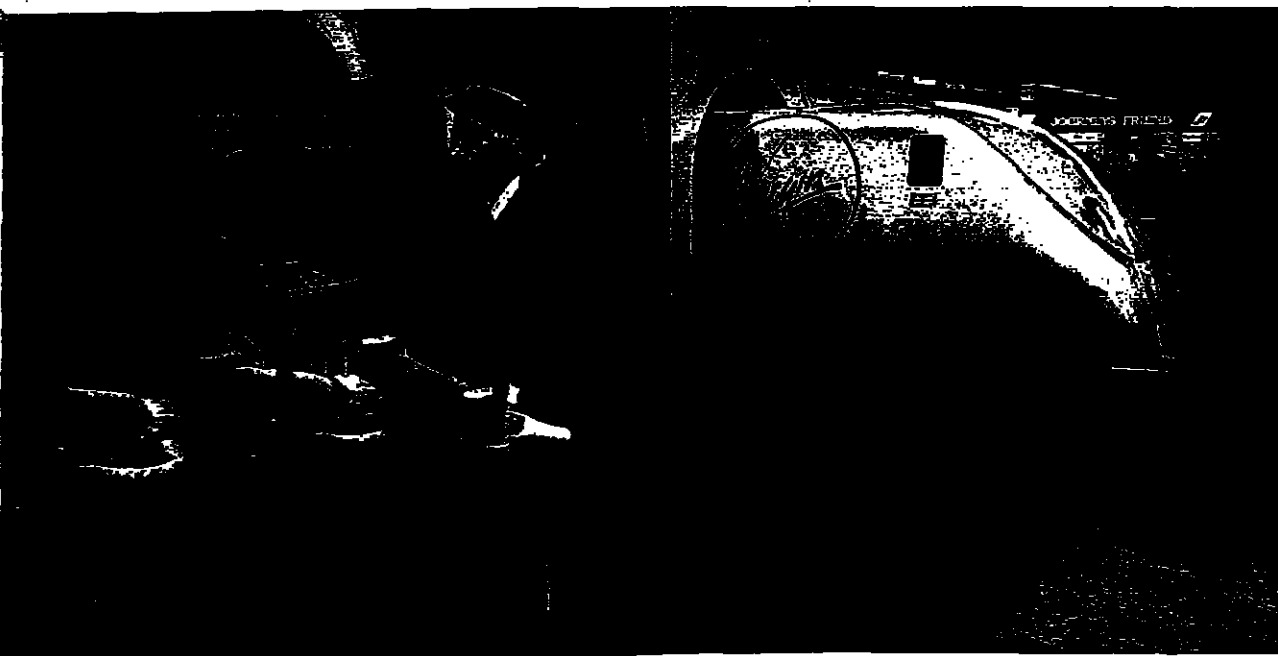
sort out the succession to the chairman's job by March, when Lord Prior retires from the £200,000-a-year post.

Lord Prior, GEC's outgoing chairman, told shareholders in September that the company would name a successor early in the new year. Sir Roger, aged 59, emerged as a leading contender for the job after George Simpson made clear that he was breaking with GEC's tradition of appointing former politicians to its board, killing off rumours that Michael Heseltine might succeed Lord Prior.

Sir Roger, who joined Smiths Industries in 1958 and has run the company since 1981, has already built up a close relationship with Mr Simpson. They are both non-executive directors of ICI and share backgrounds in the engineering industry.

If GEC does appoint Sir Roger, the move would bolster City expectations that Mr Simpson will accelerate the reform of the group which makes everything from trains to Hotpoint kitchen appliances.

— Michael Harrison and Chris Godsmark



Journey times will be slashed by the tilting train, capable of a maximum speed of 160mph

Photograph: Rui Xavier

Bids in for Virgin's £1bn tilting trains

Long-suffering passengers on the West Coast Mainline can look forward to travelling in the lap of luxury in the next millennium after bids were handed in yesterday for the biggest train order in British railway history. Michael Harrison reports on what travellers can expect.

The order for a fleet of 55 high-speed tilting trains placed by Virgin Trains is worth almost £1bn including the cost of supplying the rolling stock and maintaining it over the 13-year life of the franchise.

The seven carriage trains will offer three classes of travel - premium, business and standard class, executive lounges, seat back videos and computer games consoles. Some carriages will also be fitted with special children's seats.

Three competing bids were handed in by yesterday's deadline from GEC-Fiat, Adtranz and Siemens.

Virgin is expected to narrow the shortlist to two next month, announce a preferred bidder in January and sign firm contracts in March.

The trains will replace some of the oldest and most decrepit rolling stock on the rail network and will start entering service in 2001. Once the new fleet is in operation and the West Coast Mainline has been upgraded by Railtrack at a total cost of £2.1bn, the journey time from London to Birmingham will be cut to one hour. Manchester will be two hours away and Glasgow four hours.

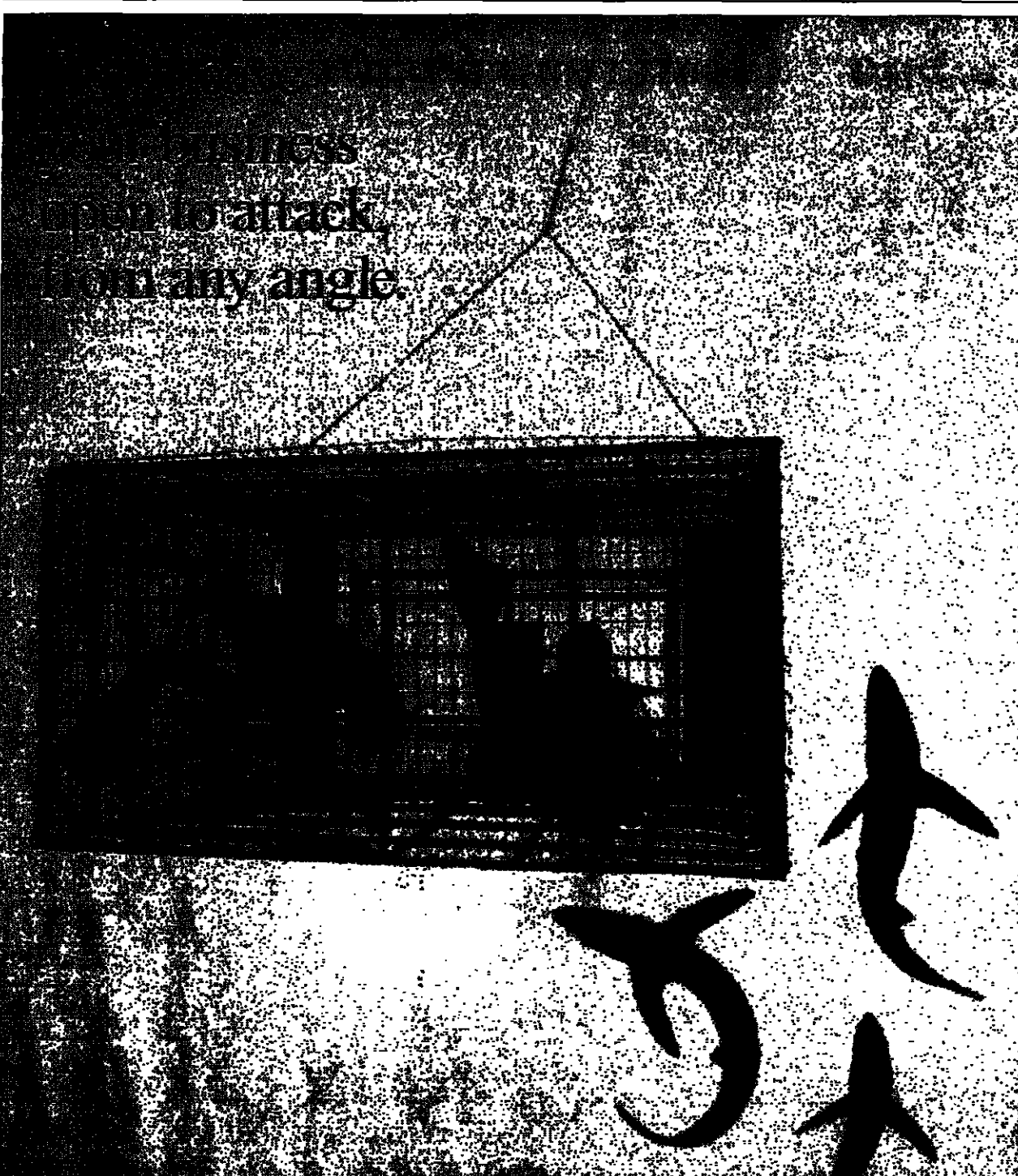
The tilting trains will be able to travel at a maximum speed of 140 mph although the three manufacturers have been asked to include an option in their bids for trains capable of 160 mph.

GEC-Alsthom and Fiat yesterday un-

veiled a half life-size model of the Pendolino tilting train which they are offering to supply. The train is already in service in Italy and eight other European countries and Great North Eastern Railways has ordered two Pendolinos.

Peter Murray, managing director of GEC-Alsthom, said that if it won the contest then 70 per cent of the work would come to the UK. The bogies, tilting mechanism and body shells will come from Italy. But all the traction equipment and interiors will be UK-sourced and the trains will be assembled at GEC-Alsthom's Birmingham and Preston factories which employ a total of 1,900.

Adtranz, a joint venture between ABB and Daimler Benz is offering the Swedish X2000 tilting train but again this will be assembled at its Derby factory, formerly part of British Rail Engineering. Siemens is bidding with the German ICE train - Inter City Express.



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THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY SAMEENA AHMAD

Japan looks good for risk-takers

After the collapse of yet another Japanese financial firm, should investors steer clear of the land of the rising sun? The answer, perversely, is no. It seems there is nothing like the sight of a big Japanese broker going under to cheer investors up.

Since the Japanese government announced that it would allow Yamaichi Securities to become Japan's biggest-ever corporate failure, the mood of international fund managers has switched from sullen bearishness to tentative optimism.

The long-held perception is that Japan's ministry of finance has been sweeping fundamental problems under the *tatami* - such as ignoring massive bad debts and turning a blind eye to questionable corporate practice. Recognition that Yamaichi Securities had to go to the wall appears, at first glance, to be the beginning of the end of Japan's bear market.

To Western eyes, Japan has for too long resisted the combination of market forces and bad debts which have led Yamaichi - and before it Sanyo Securities and Hokkaido Tokai bank - into effective bankruptcy.

The political unpopularity of using public money to bail out brokers in the midst of a recession has stopped finance ministers from stepping in to protect the interests of customers. But because it appears that the Government is now taking a tougher, more realistic approach to systemic problems in the sector, institutional investors are now thinking again. Paul Kirby, head of the Japanese desk at Global Asset Management, is now cautiously selecting Japanese banking stocks after avoiding them for 10 years.

However, for all but the opportunistic, any call to buy must be hedged with provisos. Japan's economic policy remains a muddle - as Peter Whelpton, president of Gartmore's Japanese operations, points out. And the spectre of systemic risk, affecting further banks and life insurance companies, is as daunting as ever. More worrying, the government has left itself with little room for manoeuvre, with interest rates already as low as 0.5 per cent.

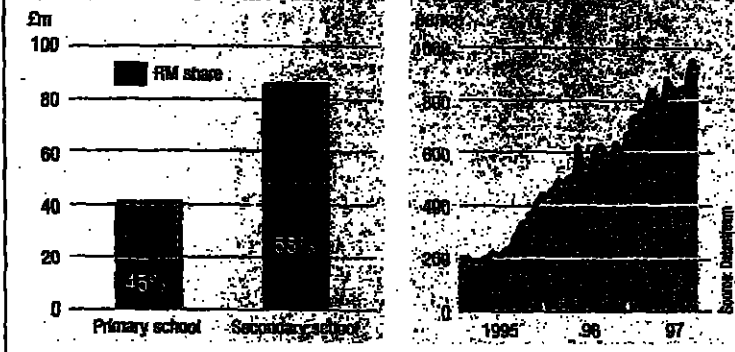
Outside banking, there may be some

RM: At a glance

Market value: £164m, share price 920p (+0p)

Trading record	Year to 30 Sept
Turnover (£m)	66.2 65.5 80.7 99.0 111
Pre-tax profits (£m)	
Earnings per share (p)	17.0 20.0 25.8 31.4
Dividends per share (p)	

UK educational IT market



scope for bottom picking - though not in export stocks such as Sony, which have already priced in the low yen. The rewards could be great, but this is strictly for the risk takers.

RM thrives on classroom IT

League tables, parental choice and a Labour government intent on hooking up every child in the UK to the Internet mean schools are starting to take information technology seriously.

Teachers still spend less than one per cent of their budgets on educational information technology, but total spending on computers and software in schools has risen six-fold in the past ten years and is accelerating.

Happily for its investors, RM is at the forefront of taking IT into the classroom. Shares in the company, which floated at 175p in 1994, have powered ahead as the company continues to take market share from its only real rival - the Acorn/Apple joint venture.

Shares in the company held firm at 920p, despite yesterday's caution that next year's interim profits would be lower than last year due to an extra £750,000 RM is ploughing into new products and that £100m of the government money which is committed to educational IT will not be available to schools until RM's second half.

Nobody worried too much either that Mike Fischer, RM's founder and chief executive for 24 years, is stepping into a non-executive role.

The focus was more on RM's increasing market share in primary and secondary schools. Unlike Acorn/Apple, RM's software is based on the universal Microsoft operating system. It also sells directly to teachers rather than through agents, allowing it to step in quickly to offer new products.

Though hardware, a low-margin business, still represents over 60 per cent of the group's revenues, RM's services and software divisions are growing much faster. RM also moved early into the Internet, with over three-quarters of the market in network connections.

Credit Lyonnais Laing has tweaked 1998 forecasts down from

£10.2m to £9.5m. That puts the shares on a steep 40 times earnings. Long-term growth prospects remain good.

US blow to Bluebird Toys

The higher they fly, the harder they fall. And Bluebird Toys has certainly taken a dive. Shares in this one-time glamor stock soared to 375p two years ago. Yesterday the price sank nearly 20 per cent to a near five year low of 81.5p when the company issued its second profit warning of the year. This is not the kind of early Christmas present chief executive Chris Burgin had in mind.

The latest warning was caused by a bombshell from Mattel, the US toy giant which distributes Polly Pocket, Bluebird's best selling toy outside of the UK. It has decided not to sell Polly Pocket at all in North America next year ahead of a relaunch of the brand in 1999. This is a serious blow for Bluebird as sales of Polly Pocket in North America will account for 7 per cent of group revenues this year.

Investors should be concerned on two counts. One is the immediate impact on the bottom line. Profits are expected to come in at around £5m-£6m this year compared to previous forecasts of some £8.5m.

The second issue is whether Mattel will work as hard on marketing Polly Pocket outside the US when it is not being sold in its main market. Given that Polly Pocket accounts for almost half of Bluebird's annual sales, this is a serious concern. It may be that Mattel is cooling on Polly completely and will decide not to relaunch it in the US after all. Given a plethora of other, reasonably priced goodies to tempt children these days - the Tamagotchi virtual pet for one - Polly Pocket may have run out of puff. A rescue bid or management buy-out is a possibility, particularly with the company valued at little more than its £15m cash pile.

On a forward multiple of just 10, the share price reflects these worries. The crucial Christmas period also looms. Unattractive on fundamentals.

US rival launches £1.1bn hostile bid for Allied Colloids

Allied Colloids was plunged into a battle for survival yesterday after Hercules, a US rival, launched a hostile £1.1bn bid for the chemicals group. Andrew Yates finds that, with other bidders likely to enter the fray, Allied faces an uphill struggle to keep its independence

said yesterday: "This is a very generous offer. Allied has underperformed the stock market by 38 per cent over the last three years. Other exporters have not underperformed by as much as others are managed better."

However, David Farrar, chief executive of Allied, blasted Hercules' bid and promised to mount a strong defence. "This undervalues our company. It is an unrealistic bid. We are not for sale and have a bright independent future," he said.

Allied's shares jumped 41.4p to 167.5p, well above the offer price, reflecting the widely held view in the City that the bid is not high enough to ensure success. Analysts are predicting a protracted takeover battle which is likely to involve more than one bidder.

Michael Eastwood, chemicals analyst at Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, said: "This is not a knockout bid. A fair price for the business is around 180p."

One analyst said: "Allied is unlikely to remain as a publicly quoted company but it will

probably be sold for a higher price. I wouldn't be surprised if Allied was forced to reopen talks with other groups to try and find a white knight."

Mr Elliott proclaimed: "This is a great business combination creating an excellent portfolio of specialty chemicals."

Experts believe Hercules could create £200m of cost savings from the deal by 1999. However analysts point out that it does not have a UK base and is not a direct competitor in any of Allied's main businesses. A larger chemicals group which operates in Allied's markets would be able to extract higher cost savings and could afford to up the stakes.

Likely potential bidders include the US groups Dow and Allied Signal and the European giants BASF and Ciba. The cash-rich UK rival Laporte has ruled itself out of the running so far but may be tempted.

Only last week Allied admitted it was in tentative takeover talks, only to announce on Friday that they had come to nothing.

BT drops move to new office

British Telecom has shelved plans to move its most senior staff into a brand new £2.4m a year central London headquarters building, following the collapse of its merger hopes with MCI of the US.

The block in Berkeley Square, one of London's most sought-after locations, was to have been the headquarters of Concert, the company created from the planned merger with MCI.

It would have housed 150 top BT staff including Sir Iain Vallance, chairman, and Sir Peter Bonfield, chief executive, though other staff would re-

main in the current BT Centre near St Paul's Cathedral.

BT signed a 15-year lease on the block in August, but confirmed yesterday that it would no longer be moving into the building and was seeking another tenant. The company had previously hinted that it would use the offices whether or not the merger went ahead.

BT admitted defeat a fortnight ago after WorldCom raised its rival offer for MCI from \$30bn (£18bn) to \$37bn.

Despite the uncertainty over the merger, BT has recently begun fitting out the building, a task expected to cost at least an-

other £2m. The company said this had been confined to "preparatory renovation work."

though this has included ripping out part of an expensive slate floor in the large entrance lobby. The steel and glass block has seven floors of offices, plus basements with car parking space.

Ralph Pearson, director of Chesterton's, which negotiated the original deal for Prudential, the building's owner, said: "We can confirm that the letting was completed in August and BT has been pressing on with fitting out the building."

- Chris Godmark

JJB Sports staff reap £4.5m

Thirty four workers at JJB Sports, the sports retailer, have made a paper fortune of £4.5m between them on share options granted at the time of the company's stock market flotation.

The senior staff, which include area managers, buyers and warehouse managers, were granted the options over JJB shares when the retailer came to the market in 1994. The shares, which started trading at the equivalent of 77p three years ago, closed at 604p last Friday, a rise of 684 per cent though they

edged down to 593.25p yesterday. The current market value of the shares under option is £5.15m, with a gain of £4.5m.

In its three years on the market JJB has grown its turnover from £60.5m to £130m while profits have risen from £7.6m to £20.3m.

David Whelan, chairman of JJB said: "I believe that no business can grow at this rate without significant input of time and effort by its staff and I am delighted that so many of our senior staff are benefiting from the

company's success over the last three years."

Mr Whelan said he was confident that a significant number of the shares would be retained by the staff though some kind of "spending spree" is expected.

JJB had 123 stores at the time of flotation. It opens its 200th outlet next month. The company has benefited from the surge in popularity in branded sportswear with clothing and trainers from companies such as Adidas, Nike and Reebok.

- Nigel Cope

Tesco eyes Far East expansion

Tesco is to send a team of managers to the Far East in the next few months to examine the possibility of opening stores in South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand. The supermarket group has been monitoring the area from its buying office in Hong Kong but is now keen to gain more information on the key markets.

Tesco said it was not deterred by the turmoil in financial markets in the Far East saying that the longer term prospects in the region were still good. "There is no commitment yet but it is

a good time to look. These are strong consumer markets."

Tesco is keen to establish if markets such as Thailand and Taiwan would prove profitable areas for the hypermarket format it has expanded so successfully in central Europe. Tesco already has stores in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia and is expanding rapidly. It will open six more hypermarkets in these countries next year and a further 6-10 the year after.

Tesco's Far Eastern adventure highlights the different

strategies of the top food retailers. While Tesco is concentrating on Europe and the Far East, Sainsbury's still feels the US is a more profitable route to expansion. Asda is performing well under its lower prices proposition while Safeway which issued another profit warning next week looks set for a period of consolidation during which it will look to return cash to shareholders after its plans to merge with Asda were called off.

- Nigel Cope

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Asda (Q)	15,22m (10.57m)	3,195m (1,750m)	18.4p (16.1p)	3.0p (2.0p)
Debenhams (Q)	70.6m (£1.71m)	3,829m (2,331m)	8.5p (7.6p)	n/a (n/a)
EDF Energy (Q)	42.6m (-)	2.1m (-)	15.7p (-)	
European Telecom (Q)	81.52m (63m)	2.4m (1.53m)	5.22p (3.28p)	0.9p (0.75p)
Life Insurance (Q)	495,267 (-)	-721,000 (-)	-14p (-)	n/a
Majestic Wine (Q)	26.47m (21.94m)	1,029m (-82,000)	5.55p (-2.13p)	1.8p
Paragon Group (Q)	- (-)	21.8m (18.10m)	24.8p (20.8p)	2.7p (2.4p)
Recycling Star (Q)	21.7m (21.04m)	490,000 (600,000)	2.3p (3.2p)	n/a
South Staffs Water (Q)	38.93m (22.45m)	10.34m (8.67m)	128p (107p)	34p (20p)
Stamco (Q)	169.8m (186.4m)	10,52m (12,78m)	2.4p (4.3p)	0.5p (1.25p)
Wm (Q)	110.2m (99.03m)	8,02m (6.91m)	31.4p (25.8p)	9.5p (8.0p)
YTL (Q)	45.94m (26.03m)	14,09m (5.7m)	2.84p (2.52p)	0.5p (n/a)
Valdara (Q)	1725.3m (1131m)	16,87m (14,44m)	24.21p (14.01p)	17.4p (16.88p)
Waterfall Holdings (Q)	12.7m (8.63m)	1,88m (830,000)	4.72p (3.5p)	
Yamaha Group (Q)	173,000 (267,000)	-844,000 (-270,000)	- (-)	

(Q) - Final (Q) - interim (Q) - Quarterly (Q) - Split period

صكزا من الاموال

Yamaichi collapse will end the Japanese culture of concealment



**HAMISH
MCRAE**
ON THE END
OF ASIAN
CONFIDENCE

Just over 10 years ago, at the end of October 1987, I found myself in Tokyo in the offices of Yasuda Fire and Marine, one of Japan's largest insurance groups. It was a week after the Wall Street crash and everyone, unsurprisingly, was talking of the threat to the world economy from financial market instability. The Japanese view, however, was much more bullish than in London or New York: the crash was just a dip, a slit in the graph of upward movements.

During the meeting, the most senior of the Yasuda people was called out to take a phone call. When he returned a few minutes later he was very excited. It had been the Ministry of Finance on the line, and the message to Japan's institutional investors was that they should buy US securities in a co-ordinated way. "Japan," he said proudly, "will save America."

This week, with the collapse of Yamaichi Securities and the visit to the IMF of Korea, the boot seems to be on the other foot. It is not just that Asian triumphalism is out. To judge by the assurances of President Bill Clinton at the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit in Vancouver, it is America (or at least the US and its allies at the IMF) that will save Asia. But there are other, more important, lessons to be gleaned from this 10-year perspective than the ease with which the balance of power in the world economy seems to flip around. We are in the middle of quite a complex turning point in the world economy and it is quite difficult even to identify which of the various current concerns really matters and which will seem unimportant a decade hence. Here are some suggestions.

Korea first. The strong probability is that this is the turning point for Korea, just as the IMF visit to Britain in 1976 proved the turning point here. The IMF is not perfect, as its many critics around the world would testify. But it has an enormous

amount of experience in establishing macro-economic stability. It knows how to turn the finances of a country round. Putting a new economic programme in place in Korea is big standard stuff. Korea is not an inherently unstable developing country so the criticism that IMF programmes do not take into account developing country problems does not apply. Korea just needs a pause to sort out its problems.

So with one possible cloud, the strong probability is that in three or four years' time Korea will have its balance of payments back under control, its banks re-financed, and its large companies refocused or, in the case of two or three of the weaker groups, broken up. The success story will resume, though in a more measured and cautious way. The cloud, the thing which might cause the Korean recovery to abort, is of course the security situation in North Korea - but that is beyond the realms of economics. A decade hence we will still be deeply concerned about North Korea, whatever happens. But the IMF rescue of the south will be a distant memory.

Japan is more complex. The fact that Tokyo was on holiday yesterday means that we have no immediate reaction to Yamaichi Securities' demise, but we should not trust it even if we had, for first reactions are frequently misleading. It will be several weeks before it is sensible to make a real judgement. That said, there are several reasons to believe that the shutdown will be very positive for the Japanese financial system, and for the economy, in the long run. For a start, Yamaichi, though the oldest of the big four securities houses, has long been the weakest. Further, the securities houses, despite their size and importance, have always had a slightly flash image in Japan compared with the banks - rather in the way stockbrokers had in Britain before the First

World War. So this is not like a big bank folding.

Besides, financial systems need to be seen to punish failure to keep themselves sweet. The great problem of the Japanese financial system has been its lack of transparency: problems are swept under the carpet. Admitting that a firm which is truly a vital step towards establishing a transparent accounting system in Japanese finance. When any large financial institution fails, there will be collateral damage: other institutions not connected with it will be hurt. So expect a rise in the "Japan premium", the extra amount Japanese financial institutions have to pay for funds on the market. The ratings agencies will now doubtless downgrade other Japanese borrowers. But, assuming that the subsequent fall-out is managed competently by the Japanese authorities, this failure could well mark the turning point in the fortunes of Japan Inc.

There is a risk that the crisis will be mismanaged, but that is not large. If you are going to have a big firm go bust, Yamaichi is about the right size: big enough to shake people up, but not large enough to devastate the economy. It may be the biggest bankruptcy since the Second World War but it only employs 7,500 people, tiny by the standards of Japanese business. The giants of Japanese industry are as healthy as ever.

That does not mean, however, that financial markets will recover suddenly or immediately. For two reasons. The first is that Japanese markets have been kicked around quite hard and will take time to rebuild their confidence. That is a two or three-year pull.

The second and more important reason is that Japan still has large structural reforms to push through. Letting financial institutions go under (while quite properly protecting customers) is the right policy in the long term: indeed it is part of

the process of reform. But in the short run, the pain of visible failure may make structural reform harder to push through.

It is interesting to see the response in the Japanese press: many reports about individuals who were losing their jobs blaming the reforms of the bureaucrats, rather than the weaknesses that resulted in failure to reform earlier. Japan has no option but to press on; but maintaining support for that will be difficult. In Britain in the 1970s there was an attitude that if a company went bust it was the duty of the government to rescue it. Getting into people's minds that if a company goes bust it is the fault of the managers, not the government, is a great sea-change. While that change is taking place, governments have to step ahead of public opinion.

Nevertheless, Japan's biggest post-war bankruptcy feels like a turning point, and end to the culture of concealment, the culture that required bad news to be kept secret and regarded markets as things to be managed by guidance from the authorities. It also marks an end to the self-confidence of 10 years ago when Japanese investors felt they could save America.

Ten years on, then, this whole East Asian turmoil will doubtless seem a bump in the progress of what will still be a very successful region of the world. What then will seem the equivalent of the Japanese overconfidence of 1987? For me, the big news of the past couple of weeks was the shift in opinion in the US about European monetary union. At last the US opinion-formers have focused on the dangers that Europe is running in its politically driven rush to a single currency, and are voicing that concern.

Is the overconfidence of European politicians the parallel to the overconfidence of the Japanese 10 years ago? I think the answer is yes - but that is a story for another day.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

**JOHN
WILLCOCK**



Stand by for a Budget leak to blow your socks off. I can exclusively reveal that the cover of Gordon Brown's Green Budget today will be coloured in vertical green stripes, shading from dark to light, and will include a picture. Gone are the boring old plain covered Budgets of yore. New Labour, New Artwork.

Yet bizarrely, prices for Budget documents are going down. The "Red Book" for Ken Clarke's 1996 Budget cost £17.90, whilst the cost of Gordon's first Budget in July this year was just £16.80.

Is this the great Global Deflation we've been hearing about?

Just as the big accountancy firms are wallowing in gold from four years of buoyant corporate activity, spare a thought for one group of people within those firms who aren't sharing in the fun: the receivers.

Our corporate undertakers inhabit a looking glass world in which bad times for us mean good times for them, and vice versa. The trouble for liquidators at the moment is, not much in the UK is going belly up.

Thus Steve Hill, an insolvency partner at Coopers & Lybrand, when asked how business was going recently, gloomily replied: "We're bumping along the bottom."

Meanwhile some receivers are going to where the action is, in the currency crisis-hit Far East. Lots of stuff is going bust out there. For instance, Stephen Adamson of Ernst & Young, who helped rescue Canary Wharf when it went bust three years ago, flew out there recently to lend a hand.

The receivers shouldn't worry. According to Simon Bevan, head of Arthur Andersen's Fraud Services Unit, the banks have been taken in by so many fraudsters that "another crop of loan disasters is on the horizon."

Mr Bevan, a former Hong Kong policeman, reckons that the UK's big six high street banks lost around £2bn to loan fraudsters in the years 1991-1996. Something to remem-

ber next time you're taken to task by your bank manager for going overdrawn.

Uh-oh. Sell everything and head for the hills. Last week's CBI Industrial Trends Survey talked of a good chance for a "soft landing" for the UK economy. The last time people were discussing a soft landing it was in the late 1980s. And we all know what happened then.

Another culprit is Stuart Morley, national head of research at Grimley, the property agents, writing in a research note this week: "There is some concern... that the soft landing envisaged may turn out to be harder than expected."

Call me superstitious, but in order to avoid another Lawson-style recession why don't we avoid the phrase completely. "Slow-down" will suffice.

Ding dong merrily on high, in the City the bells are ringing. The Bank of England is supplying bell ringers to the Personal Investment Authority's Carol Concert to be held at St Bartholomew's Priory on Thursday 18 December.

Some carollers may hope the boys from the Bank don't pull on the bell ropes too enthusiastically. The service comes a day after the PIA Christmas Party, to be held in Cabot Hall, Canary Wharf.

The PIA's own Social Brief advertises the event with the slogan: "Find out what Scotsmen wear under their kilts..." Pipers from the Scots Guards will welcome the revellers, and Scottish dancing will be followed by a disco. Suitably, tickets are available from one Ian Dewar. The PIA is urgently seeking experts in Scottish dancing, who can provide a bit of coaching before the big night.

Just one thought. Anyone trying to find out what is worn under the kilts of the Scots Guards is unlikely to outlive the night.

The ball's in the back of the onion bag, and the crowd go wild. Barrie Pierpoint, chief executive of Leicester City football club, is Britain's Best Boss. Barrie won the Best of the Year award yesterday at a bash at the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park Hotel in London.

The twinkle-toed midfielder was nominated by his PA Michelle Newman and had to undergo "a rigorous selection process" before being presented with his gong by Nick Butcher, managing director of DHL International, the delivery service.

Leicester has just floated successfully on the stock market. The team won the Coca Cola Cup last year and were promoted to the Premier League, where they have won a reputation for doing well on a shoestring budget.

DHL adds: "By winning the competition as the UK's top boss, Barrie Pierpoint and Michelle Newman each win a holiday of their choice." So there you go. It pays to be nice to the boss after all.

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	D-Mark
UK	10000	1.5919	0.5407
Australia	24323	1.4444	0.5297
Austria	20559	1.3229	0.4581
Belgium	61294	36.726	12.454
Canada	24072	1.4213	0.4861
Denmark	1132	13.66	4.6622
EU	14525	1.076	0.3594
Finland	8282	6.847	2.294
France	9526	1.762	0.593
Germany	23831	2.9071	0.973
Greece	46105	46.556	15.738
Hong Kong	33361	10.71	3.542
Italy	15776	12.59	4.190
Japan	26731	16.747	5.657
Malaysia	2743	21.325	7.075
Mexico	5507	5.5477	1.8522
Netherlands	13308	3.2641	1.093
New Zealand	27190	2.7025	0.891
Norway	11549	1.1936	0.4071
Portugal	30013	259.53	87.22
Saudi Arabia	65372	6.5372	2.1922
Singapore	22894	2.2892	0.763
South Africa	51758	5.1758	1.734
Spain	24527	2.4527	0.819
Sweden	12318	12.318	4.054
Switzerland	23768	2.3768	0.802
US	1.6835	1.0000	0.3575

Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	18935	10000
Brazil	19733	10000
China	9399	8.2801
Czech Rep	1549	14.027
Egypt	67029	3.2991
Ghana	37253	22.050
Hungary	33118	32.64
India	64223	32.670
Indonesia	61453	38375
Kuwait	10328	10.328
Nigeria	13230	70.259

Latest Unit Trust Prices

Fund	Sell	Buy	Ytd	Fund	Sell	Buy	Ytd
ABG Growth Trust Ltd	22389	27140	0.00	Investment Income	4832	255	0.00
4 Star Global Funds Ltd	22389	27140	0.00	Managed Growth	4838	258	0.00
Top 100 US Fund	22389	27140	0.00	Managed Income	4838	258	0.00
25386	27140	0.00	Managed Investments	4837	257	0.00	
Global Strategy	982	595	0.75	PGI MSCI EAFE Index	1250	1250	51.00
FTSE 100 Index	9843	10312	2.21	PGI MSCI US Index	1250	1250	51.00
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Regulators to investigate selling of new high-commission pensions

City regulators are to investigate a new type of pension policy, which is attracting £1bn a year of investments. There are concerns that thousands of the policies may have been mis-sold, Andrew Verity reports.

The Personal Investment Authority said it had received evidence that advisers who sell so-called income draw-down plans were being tempted to market the products by the prospect of large commissions. This marketing approach could be against the best interests of their clients.

A PIA spokeswoman said: "We now have evidence of high commissions which might give rise to bias in the advice given. We are looking into how the product has

been sold." Financial advisers have, according to industry sources, received sums as high as £30,000 when clients have put £500,000 into a single income draw-down plan, a type of personal pension aimed at wealthy investors.

Industry sources fear that high commissions will take such a large chunk of capital out of the plans that there is a high risk investors will lose money over the life of the plan - even if investments do well. Investors will only benefit if the plans grow faster than 11 per cent a year. Historically, performance has been lower than this.

Income draw-down plans are sold to investors who are about to retire but want to put off buying an annuity, a policy which pays a guaranteed income from retirement to death.

Kenneth Clarke, former Chancellor of the Exchequer, enabled the introduction of

the plans in 1995. The move followed complaints that pensioners were getting incomes thousands of pounds lower than they would have received if annuity rates were better.

The income draw-down plans were intended to allow retiring investors to draw a variable income from a pension fund without buying an annuity. The money could then be invested until the investors were forced by the rules to buy an annuity at the age of 75.

However, independent advisers are instead selling the plans on the basis that clients do not want to swap their capital for an annuity, which cannot be passed on to their heirs. Concerns have been raised that some advisers have been selling the products because they can extract up to 6 per cent of a client's pension fund in commission. With the alternative, an annuity, commission is just 1 per cent.

Microsoft concedes to Brussels after rival's complaint

Microsoft, the US computer software giant run by Bill Gates, was yesterday found guilty of infringing European competition law after a complaint from a rival California-based software group.

The European Commission said it had obtained concessions from Microsoft that would enable the rival, Santa Cruz Operation (SCO), to develop a competing software product.

The announcement followed a ruling earlier this year from Brussels that the enforcement of an existing agreement between Microsoft and SCO infringed European competition law because it hampered the smaller company's ability to compete.

Microsoft has now agreed to change a 1987 contract which SCO had complained restricted its ability to develop a future

version of its Unix operating system software for Intel-based server computers.

The commission said in a statement that the contract required SCO to base its Unix products on work done by Microsoft in 1987 and to pay a set royalty for licences based on the same work. It said this prevented SCO from competing fairly with Microsoft's MS Office operating system.

Microsoft has been under the eye of the EU and the US Justice Department since 1994 when the two authorities joined forces to obtain changes to its licensing practices.

The commission's investigation of Santa Cruz's complaint was only one of about half a dozen Microsoft-related anti-trust cases pending in the European Union, an EU source said.



Problems for Polly Pocket knock Bluebird

Shares in Bluebird Toys lost almost 20 per cent of their value yesterday when the company issued its second profits warning this year.

The group said Mattel, the US toy giant which distributes Bluebird's Polly Pocket toy range (pictured left) outside the UK, would not now be distributing the brand at all in North America next year. It plans to re-launch the collectable toy range in 1999 instead.

Mattel has suffered from overstocking of the Polly Pocket range in recent years and is keen to clear stock and re-invigorate the brand.

Bluebird said the impact of this marketing change would mean current year results were likely to be slightly below market expectations. Analysts are now forecasting profits of £5m-£6m instead of a range of £6.5m-£8.5m. Bluebird shares fell 18.5p to 81.5p. Investment column, page 24

ScottishPower links up with trade unions

ScottishPower yesterday stepped up its drive into the emerging domestic gas and electricity markets with a deal which could give access to 7 million trade union members.

The link up with Union Energy, the fuel company set up by the Trades Union Congress, follows a similar partnership between ScottishPower and the Automobile Association. ScottishPower will be given sole responsibility for supplying fuel and billing customers in a five-year contract, with Union Energy organising marketing and retaining its brand name.

"The cost for us of becoming a fully fledged supplier was just too prohibitive. We were always clear that we needed a partnership with an existing supplier," said Mike Jones, chairman of Union Energy.

ScottishPower was chosen from a shortlist of six bidders, most of which were regional electricity companies, and won partly because its workforce was highly unionised.

Union Energy said it hoped to poach 500,000 homes from British Gas and the regional electricity companies over the next three years.

The 7 million UK trade unionists speak for 4.5 million homes, with annual bills worth £2.5bn.

- Chris Godsmark

TBI shortlisted to run Luton airport

TBI, the airports and property group, has been put on the short list of bidders to run Luton airport. A preferred bidder is likely to be announced by the end of the year. TBI is also in talks with Thomson, aimed at enticing the UK's largest tour operator back to its Belfast airport. TBI has launched a multi-million pound redevelopment of the Northern Irish airport. The company announced a rise in pre-tax profits to £14.1m (£9.7m) for the six months to 30 September.

Majestic plans to double

Majestic Wine, the UK's largest wine warehouse chain, announced pre-tax profits of £1.026m (£465,000) in the six months to September. Tim How, Majestic's chief executive, said the British were drinking more wine and paying higher prices for it. "People are becoming more adventurous and broadening their palates," he said. The group plans to double the size of its 69-strong chain.

Big profit at GB Railways

GB Railways, which runs trains from London to East Anglia, has become the latest group to announce a large profit after buying a piece of the privatised British Rail. The group made £2.1m in the six months to September due to strong passenger growth and lower-than-anticipated restructuring costs.

Software costs a write-off

Companies face having to write off costs associated with modifying their computer software to deal with the millennium problem to the profit and loss account under proposals to be published today by the Accounting Standards Board's Urgent Issues Taskforce. The only exceptions will be where a company already has an accounting policy for capitalising software costs and where the expenditure increases an asset's value rather than just maintaining its usefulness.

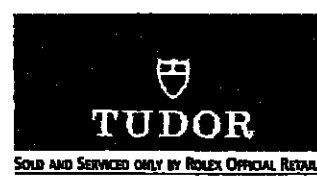
Hall & Tawse sold for £20m

Alfred McAlpine, the construction group, has sold Hall & Tawse, its regional contracting business, to Mansell, a contracting company, for £20m. Hall & Tawse last year returned an operating profit of £1.7m on a turnover of £214.7m.

The New Tudor Chronograph, around £1,000.



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SAILING

Humphries steers in his dream team

Swedish Match won the second leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race, with a Briton at the helm.

It was a personal triumph that should never have happened, for, as Stuart Alexander writes from Fremantle, Matt Humphries' race looked to have finished in Cape Town.

Matt Humphries always wanted to lead the charge through the Southern Ocean and be the first Briton into Fremantle. However, never in his wildest dreams did he expect to do so at the helm of Swedish Match.

The 26-year-old Humphries thought his race would get no further than Cape Town, where his hopes disintegrated and withdrawal of Neil Barth's America's Challenge.

It looked as though he would be left on the dock when the second leg started, but a last-minute transfer to Swedish Match turned not only into a triumph for a crew who finished eighth out of 10 boats on the first leg from Southampton, but a personal victory snatched from the ashes of a burned-out campaign.

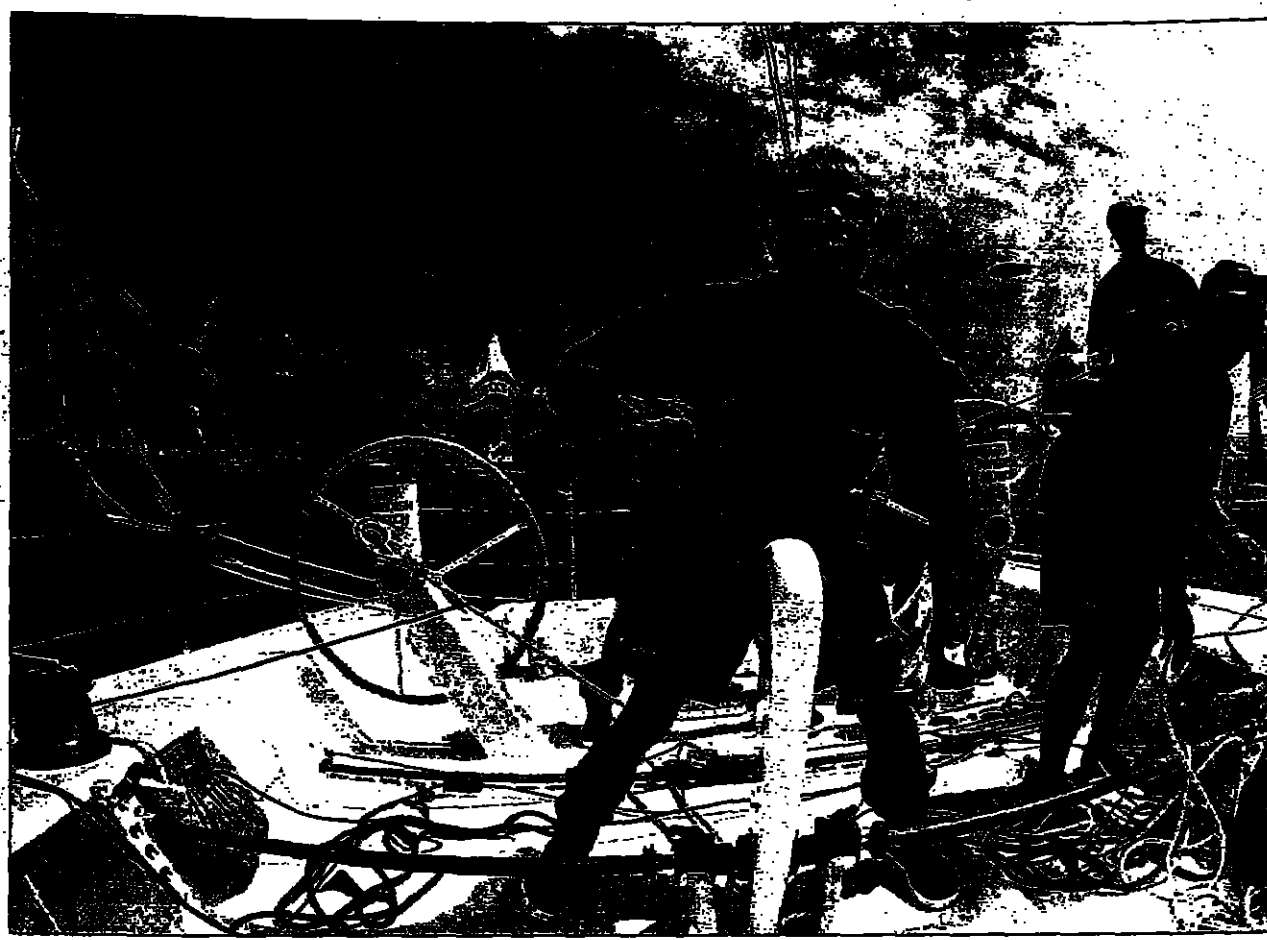
Humphries hardly knew the men he was joining: they had been together for nearly a year and did not know much about him. "They are hard men, so to join a team like that is potentially very difficult," he said. "I kept

wondering if I had done the right thing. Fifteen days and 5,000 miles is a long time at sea and we were going to go through hell together."

Humphries should not have worried. "From day one it all came together very well," he says. "Their acceptance made me feel I should give as much as I have got. It was a kind of gratitude, almost. The result was I probably worked harder on this leg than on any in any other yacht race in my life."

In some ways it was like joining Manchester United and finding a whole new way of playing the game. At the same time, a helmsman is always under scrutiny. The crew want to know if they can produce speed without risking their lives too much, while they are aware that the onboard computer is monitoring their performance against previous efforts in the same conditions.

As if peer and personal pressure was not enough, the conditions in which Swedish Match raced were as tough as



Matt Humphries muscled in on some second-leg work aboard Swedish Match

Photograph: Allsport

any on board have seen. "They were not just hard, they were relentless, and not just for me, for everyone," Humphries said. "There was no respite, no time to re-energise. And all the time the style of both the skipper Gunnar Krantz and co-skipper

Erle Williams was to keep driving the boat."

"These guys are workaholics, nothing like the occasionally more laid-back attitude of some British crews," Humphries said. "Gunnar wants 100 per cent the whole time, driving the crew on

whether we had the energy or not. He and Erle work well together. Both put boat speed as a priority. We are not there to cruise around the world at 90 per cent of potential.

"If something goes wrong then the first thing we do is get

the boat back up to speed. Then we tidy up, or eat, or get some sleep. Everything was done very smoothly and even when there's chaos it's smooth chaos. There is never a raised voice. You know what you have to do."

Humphries admits there are times when everyone wonders how much more they can take. But there was never any temptation to ease off. Even when they had a lead of 300 miles, the pressure to increase the gap on Innovation Kvaerner was always there.

The crew of Swedish Match feel that they have now been blooded and will know how to produce the power again. "It was only one leg out of nine, but having experienced victory, we want to do it again," Krantz said. The dream for Humphries now is to be first home on the third leg to Sydney.

— Stuart Alexander

Frostad not fazed by trouble and strife on the ocean wave

"I think," said Innovation Kvaerner's skipper, Knut Frostad, "there may still be some blood down the side." Safely tied up here in Fremantle with enough points from second place for the leg from Cape Town to give him the overall lead in the Whitbread Race, it was time for the Norwegian to breathe a sigh of relief.

A serious encounter with a whale on the starboard side of the boat meant that three ring

frames in the bow were cracked and had to be repaired using an epoxy kit. It also meant that for 24 hours Frostad had to ease back, change course, and abandon a plan to go south of the Kerguelen Islands as repairs were completed and urgent radio telephone conversations took place with yacht designers.

The boat will take a week to repair. "We were not sure how much we could load up the boat," said the navigator Mar-

cel van Triest, who said he would not, anyway, have taken the decision to break away from the pack in the way which had given the leg winner, Swedish Match, the break.

Lawrie Smith's Silk Cut should finish fourth today, but third overnight was his old crewman Paul Standbridge, now skipper of Dennis Connor's Toshiba. That yacht, with a time of 16 days 5 hr 27 min 12 sec, had the pulpit, most of the starboard

stanchions and the stern quarter pushed ripped out and crewman David Allen suffering from suspected cracked ribs. The boat, he said, had been given the horizontal test a few times.

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE (second leg, 4,800 miles, Cape Town to Fremantle) - 1st Swedish Match (Swedish Match); 2nd Innovation Kvaerner (Knut Frostad); 3rd Dennis Connor (Paul Standbridge); 4th Silk Cut (Lawrie Smith); 5th US LPGA (Neil Barth); 6th US LPGA (Neil Barth); 7th US LPGA (Neil Barth); 8th US LPGA (Neil Barth); 9th US LPGA (Neil Barth); 10th US LPGA (Neil Barth).

GOLF

Monty presses for rankings rethink

Colin Montgomerie, the European No 1, called for the world rankings to become more representative after European nations stole the show at the World Cup. Andy Farrell reports from Klawah Island, South Carolina.

First the Ryder Cup win at Valderrama, now a superb showing in the World Cup here. These are good times for European golf. Not that you would know from the world rankings.

Padraig Harrington, world No 78, and Paul McGinley, No 101, brought Ireland's second World Cup title on Sunday - by five strokes. Scotland were second, one ahead of the Americans. Open champion Justin Leonard and USPGA winner Davis Love II took the next four places.

In the individual competition, the International Trophy, Colin Montgomerie, at 22 under, beat Alex Cejka by two and Ignacio Garrido by three to win for the first time on American soil. Seven of the top-eight were European. Sweden were forced out of the team competition when Per-Ulrik Johansson fell sick again on Saturday night.

"European golf is on an up right now," Montgomerie, the five-times European No 1, said. "After the triumph in the Ryder Cup, we've a lot of talent in Europe. It's great we can finish first, second, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh. We've had a re-emergence of good young players."

McGinley, with two wins in six weeks, is 30; Harrington 26; Cejka is 26 and Garrido 25. There are the likes of Thomas Bjorn, Darren Clarke, Lee Westwood and Andrew Coltart. "But we have a problem with the world rankings," added Montgomerie. "When the World Golf Championship events start in 1999, we are only going to have eight or nine players in them and that is a backwards step. We deserve more points for European events."

This has been discussed in players' meetings but only eight Europeans are in the top 50 in the world, led by the 34-year-old Montgomerie in sixth place. His partner, Raymond Russell, whose contribution to Scotland's 20 under par was four under, had a virtuoso display to learn from as Monty closed with three 66s. "You'd be stupid not to play attention," Russell said. "It is not the birdies he makes, but the bogeys he doesn't. He doesn't make any mistakes. He makes the game look very simple."

Sweden's Annika Sorenstam completed the year the way she started it - with a win. Sorenstam parred the third hole of a sudden-death playoff for her sixth victory of the season at the US LPGA Tour Championship in Las Vegas on Sunday. Sorenstam also secured US LPGA Player of the Year honours for the second time in three years.

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PHILIPS



Today we publish the latest results of The Independent Fantasy Football League. The player scores are for all League games played until Sunday November 23rd. The league table includes all scores up to November 9th. The monthly winner will receive a pair of tickets to an England home international, while the overall winner gets a trip to the 1998 world cup in France.

Every time one of your players score you get four points. There are four points for a keeper or a defender every time their team keeps a clean sheet. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e. if there is a one goal difference in the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded 1 bonus point awarded in addition to standard goal related points. Each successful Assist, a pass judged by our experts to lead directly to a goal, will give a player 3 points. The opinion of our experts on the matter is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

If a player is given a Yellow Card they lose 1 point, if a player is given a Red Card they lose 3 points. Own goals, either scored or conceded, do not count.

The Premiership Manager that you choose will be awarded 3 points if their real-life team wins, 1 point is awarded if they draw and no points are given if they lose.

Updated player scores and league tables will be published every Tuesday in The Independent and repeated the following Sunday in the Independent on Sunday.

HOW TO SCORE			
player score	1	2	3
clean sheet	4	5	6
winning goal	7	8	9
assist	10	11	12
own goal	13	14	15
yellow card	16	17	18
red card	19	20	21
manager's team wins	22	23	24
draw	25	26	27

INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

OVERALL SCORE CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 8 AUGUST - 24 NOVEMBER

LEAGUE TABLE			
POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	Miss Lisa Wild	Amerisco	535
2	Mr Chris King	Seeking Victory	535
3	Mr Phil Tuffey	Bootham End Old Boys	535
4	Mr David Evans	Southville FC	534
5	Mr Martin Pawley	Roberts Rovers	534
6	Mr B Szal	The Unouchables	533
7	Mr David Aston	Billy Boys 2nd II	533
8	Mr Archer	No Wright	532
9	Mr B Sral	Simply The Best	532
10	Mr P Green	Pewie Rangers	532
11	Mr Stewart Scott	The Dream Team	532
12	Mr Abdul Choudi	Nickles 9th II	530
13	Mr E Gromley	Celtic Warriors	528
14	Mr J McCrossan	Washed Up Army	528
15	Mr Stewart Scott	Unbeatable	528
16	Mr Chris Thomas	Scunthorpe Extras	528
17	Mr Ian Boyle	Wentley Bundlers	527
18	Mr David Baker	Deja Vu	527
19	Mr A Wingrove	Tony's Brace	527
20	Mr Tom Lyons	Diana's Demons	527
21	Mr David Edmondson	Edmo United	527
22	Mr Tony Brazier	Wow For Short	525
23	Mr Brady	Look Live!	525
24	Mr Ken Boyle	Clogston Rovers	525
25	Mr Michael Rickard	Aller Lambert	522
26	Mr Trevor Russ	Sammy's Soccer Scorchers	522
27	Mr Killerby	The Killer Bees	521
28	Mr David Baker	Dead Beat	521
29	Mr D Deposit	Quick Start	520
30	Mr Steven Mann	Rebecca Rovers	520
31	Mr J Sale	One West City	520
32	Mr David Boreham	Boreham United	520
33	Mr G Bell	Sunning Stars	520
34	Mr John Cox	Retro Rovers	520
35	Mr J McCrossan	Washed Up Army	520
36	Mr David Aston	Billy Boys 3rd II	520
37	Mr P Tulse	Pin Ups 2	520
38	Mr Ian Down	Ruffus	520
39	Mr K Brady	Mr Final Selection	520
40	Mr G Ford	Lindrope Rovers	520
41	Mr Mike Mitchell	Enduring Image	520
42	Mr G Whitebread	The Treen Team	520
43	Mr David Anderson	Jackie Lads	520
44	Mr David Aston	Billy's Boys	520
45	Mr Mike Ewins	I've Starred But Will I Finish	520
46	Mr Mike Ewins	Mike's A Team	520
47	Mr A Mitchell	The Eye For It	520

CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	WK	OF	VALUE	HT
GOALKEEPERS						
300	Seamus	ARS	1	38	40	
301	Lark	ARS	0	0	10	
302	Maudslayi	ARS	0	0	3/0	
303	Bostick	AV	0	27	40	
304	Oakes	AV	1	19	15	
305	Watson	BAR	5	8	10	
306	Lene	BAR	5	8	10	
307	Flowers	BLA	5	8	10	
308	Fildes	BLA	5	8	10	
309	Brannigan	BOL	5	34	12	
310	De Gooey	CHE	1	38	10	
311	Gurney	CHE	1	38	10	
312	Hodgman	COV	0	35	22	
313	Nash	CRY	0	0	10	
314	O'Connell	CRY	0	0	10	
315	Parnham	CRY	0	0	10	
316	Smith	CRY	0	0	10	
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29/RACING

THE INDEPENDENT
TUESDAY
25 NOVEMBER 1997
29

Grey Man should increase his majority

One Man, who has his second outing of the season today, seems destined never to go down as one of the great horses. He is the parallel of a supreme athlete gifted at 300m - caught between distances.

Richard Edmondson reports.

The local MP may not be the big wheel he once was, but the most prestigious race in his Huntingdon constituency reaches the peak of its popularity this afternoon. It has been something of a surprise that Don King has not been spotted in the Fens this week attempting to get a promotional slice of a Peterborough Chase which sees

Martha's Son, Viking Flagship and One Man borne to the course by their attendants.

The meeting immediately puts a lie to the suggestion that Cheltenham in March (and possibly Liverpool the following month) is the only place to witness top-class jumping that summers the blood.

The Peterborough is run over a compromise distance of two and a half miles. One Man would prefer a little further, while his two rivals will be getting towards the extremity of their stamina range.

There is an argument for believing that Viking Flagship, who now has the clanking broad pocket of a field marshal, has dodged the hail at so many theatres of war that he may have become shellshocked. However, as tenacity and an unbreak-

able spirit are at the core of his success, it would not be entirely inappropriate to voice this opinion when his choppers are anywhere near you. The 10-year-old has been counted out more times than Frank Bruno, yet on his reappearance at Exeter there was a demonstration

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: One Man (Huntingdon 3.10)
NB: Solo Gent (Huntingdon 2.10)

he was not quite ready for de-commissioning with a smooth defeat of stablemate Mulligan. Viking Flagship, though, has something to find with Martha's Son on their recent encounters. Tim Forster's gelding captured the Queen Mother Champion Chase at the Festival earlier this year, followed by the Melling Chase at Liverpool, where he shouldered-chance the first to give the boys a chance but still managed to sweep home. On both pillages, the Viking was among the victims.

Aintree represented only Martha's Son's second completed race since he did himself a mischief in this contest in 1995. He does though have form on the track, having won three times at Huntingdon, including this race, in 1994.

One Man, on the other hand, makes his debut at Bampton, which should not be excessively detrimental as he routinely runs well on tight courses. The King George VI Chase at Kempton and Queen Mother Champion Chase at the Festival are now the main ingredients of his programme

following connections' belated recognition that their beast does not get the Gold Cup yards of 3 1/4 miles and 110 yards, especially at Cheltenham.

Even if One Man jumps over the rails and lands on top of his owner's car this afternoon, he will be unlikely to let John Hales. Mr Golden Bear Toys has been having rather a remunerative time of it recently as his company has been in charge of distributing little Telebutts. There was no paunch, however, when One Man again won the Charlie Hall Chase at Wetherby on his seasonal debut.

The nine-year-old is at his best before a new calendar is pinned up on the wall, and the grey ONE MAN (3.10) has more than the coincidence of running in John Major's home-land to recommend him.

Elsewhere on the card, there is reason to support animals proven in this environment. Solo Gent (next best 2.10) will be better now he is returned to the arena where he has won four times. Wamdhia (3.40) too has a course record of five wins, two seconds and two thirds from nine runs and can win the race named in her honour. Oi Mother (2.40) can complete the set and a hat-trick, particularly as the Nicholson-Maguire alliance is going so well.

Worcester too gets a rare visitation from the television cameras and Big Ben Dam (3.25) can advertise his expertise on his reappearance, as he did for the only time last season. In addition, like Eulogy (2.25) at Richard Rowe's yard. He should too.

HUNTINGDON

HYPERION	
1.10 Kippinour	2.40 Bessie Brown
1.40 Dantes Cavalier	3.10 Martha's Son
2.10 COOLE HILL (nap)	3.40 Bold Statement (nb)

GOING: Good.

Right-hand, level course. Run-in 200yds.

AD: Course is at junction of A1 and A63. Huntingdon station (services from London, Kings Cross) is 10 min. by train. AD: 10 min. by train. AD: 10 min. by train.

LEADING TRAINERS: K. Bailey 20-40 (24%), J. Gifford 15-47 (24%), G. Hubbard 12-57 (21%), T. Forster 11-40 (22%), N. Henderson 10-33 (24%), N. Henderson 9-33 (24%), N. Henderson 8-33 (24%), N. Henderson 7-33 (24%), N. Henderson 6-33 (24%), N. Henderson 5-33 (24%), N. Henderson 4-33 (24%), N. Henderson 3-33 (24%), N. Henderson 2-33 (24%), N. Henderson 1-33 (24%).

FAVOURITES (FIVE-YEAR RECORD): 207 wins from 478 races (33%).

SLIPPED FIRST TIME: Canby Bay (10)

1.10 HUNTINGDON SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS G) £2,375 added 3m 2m Penalty Value £2,007

1	25405 ELITE GOVERNOR (2m) (Westerham) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	50328 KIPPAUR (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	50328 KIPPAUR (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	50328 KIPPAUR (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
5	50328 KIPPAUR (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
6	50328 KIPPAUR (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	50328 KIPPAUR (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	50328 KIPPAUR (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	50328 KIPPAUR (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	50328 KIPPAUR (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

1.40 HEALTH-SPA WATER NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,075 added 2m 4f 110yds Penalty Value £3,394

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
5	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
6	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

1.25 WORCESTER

HYPERION	
1.25 Barton Green	2.55 Three Farthings
1.55 Who Am I	3.25 Beeston
2.55 Eulogy	3.55 Saxon Duke

GOING: Soft (Good to Soft in places).

Left-hand, level course, easy turn and a one turning run.

AD: Course is on the A443 by the River Sever. Worcester (Foregate) is 10 min. by train. AD: 10 min. by train.

LEADING TRAINERS: M. Potts 40-100 (24%), N. Henderson 10-33 (24%), N. Henderson 9-33 (24%), N. Henderson 8-33 (24%), N. Henderson 7-33 (24%), N. Henderson 6-33 (24%), N. Henderson 5-33 (24%), N. Henderson 4-33 (24%), N. Henderson 3-33 (24%), N. Henderson 2-33 (24%), N. Henderson 1-33 (24%).

FAVOURITES (FIVE-YEAR RECORD): 207 wins from 478 races (33%).

SLIPPED FIRST TIME: Canby Bay (10)

1.25 SEVERN VALLEY CATERING NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,375 added 2m Penalty Value £2,007

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
5	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
6	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

1.55 SEVERN VALLEY CATERING NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,375 added 2m Penalty Value £2,007

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
5	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
6	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

12.05 LINGFIELD

HYPERION	
12.05 Gold Lance 12.35 Another Monk 1.05 Gold Clipper 1.35 Running Stag 2.05 Kaffi 2.35 Balthazar 3.05 Sealmaster 3.35 Alfahai	
GOING: Standard. Stallions: 1m - outside, rest - inside.	
AD: Course is on the A443 by the River Sever. Worcester (Foregate) is 10 min. by train. AD: 10 min. by train.	

2.25 COUNTRYCOUNTS COUNTS NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS D) £19,800 added 2m 7f 110yds Penalty Value £11,820

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
5	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
6	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

2.55 CARMELO AND JOHN'S SILVER WEDDING HURDLE (CLASS C) £4,850 added 2m 4f Pen Value £2,345

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
5	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
6	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

1.05 FAUCETS FOR GROHMETEC RADAR OP (DIV I) £3,300 added 1m 2f

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
5	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
6	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

1.35 FAUCETS FOR GROHMETEC RADAR OP (DIV I) £3,300 added 1m 2f

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
5	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
6	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

3.25 TRAMPS NIGHT CLUB OF WORCESTER HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m 7f 110yds Penalty Value £3,678

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
5	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
6	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

3.55 JULIAN LEIGH, REDENHAM PARK STUD NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,375 added 2m Penalty Value £2,007

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
5	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
6	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

2.05 FAUCETS FOR GROHMETEC RADAR OP (DIV I) £3,300 added 1m 2f

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
3	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
4	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
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6	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
7	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
8	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
9	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
10	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford

2.35 FAUCETS FOR GROHMETEC RADAR OP (DIV I) £3,300 added 1m 2f

1	PRINCE PATRICK (2m) (G. Bailey) N. Lippard 5 10	W. Dunsford
2		

RAC RALLY



Forest foray: Dirt flies up from the Subaru of Italy's Piero Liatti and Fabrizio Pons during the 14th stage at Pantparthog in Wales yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

McRae pulls himself out of a hole to share lead

The tension mounts for Colin McRae as the RAC Rally heads for its last day. Derick Alsop reports from Cheltenham.

A day of drama, controversy and anxiety ended with Colin McRae and Richard Burns, remarkably, together on the same time in the Network Q RAC Rally and the world championship delightfully set an enthralling finale.

co-driver Graham Lewis, who were seriously injured when they crashed on the Hafren stage. Further incidents on that stage and the next forced the organisers to abandon them. Lewis was airlifted to hospital with suspected chest and spinal injuries.

McRae picked himself up from eighth place in the early morning gloom to draw level with Burns on the final stage. To become champion, McRae must win the rally and hope that Tommi Makinen, at present sixth, drops at least one place in today's concluding proceedings in south Wales.

If the 29-year-old Scot now pulls it off, he will be acclaimed on the famous racecourse here this evening as the most popular winner since Desert Orchid. Such a scenario seemed a distant fantasy when he was caught out by fog and darkness on the first Welsh forest stage yesterday. He put his Subaru in a ditch and negotiated the rest of the Radnor stage with extreme caution and lost 90 seconds. His main rivals overhauled him, none more gleefully than Burns, the 26-year-old Englishman.

Burns said: "I knew I had six minutes more daylight than the others, so I went full force. I passed Didier Auriol, who had been two minutes in front of me. It's a great start."

McRae, unsurprisingly, had a different perspective. He could not contain his frustration and said: "I couldn't see a thing and drove straight off a straight piece of road. It was terrible out there. It shouldn't be allowed in a professional world championship. It should be decided by who's the quickest driver, not the weather. Maybe they should reverse the running order a bit the following day to make it fair."

He channelled his anger in a positive manner thereafter, winning four consecutive stages and climbing closer to Burns. The gap was reduced by a further 10 seconds when the Mitsubishi driver incurred a penalty for taking too long at a service stop. His team-mate, Makinen, received a 20-minute penalty for a similar offence. Burns retaliated on the penultimate stage but McRae's five-second margin of victory on the last sent both back to headquarters here on 2hr 13min 43sec.

CRICKET

Riot erupts in Belgrade

Dozens of basketball fans, including Belgrade's acting mayor, have been injured in riots which erupted during a match involving Yugoslavia's two leading teams.

HOCKEY

Eastcote suffer frustration

Eastcote's dream of achieving National League status after just one season in the ESL South Premier suffered a setback over the weekend when they were held to a 2-2 draw by Beckenham to rob them of their maximum points record, although they are still three points ahead of their nearest challengers, City of Portsmouth.

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Packers turn on the style

Dorsey Levens ran riot as the Super Bowl champions Green Bay Packers ended an eight-game losing streak against Dallas with a 45-17 victory over the Cowboys on Sunday.

CRICKET

Stewart leaves in good heart

Micky Stewart leaves Lord's next month, happy at last that English cricket is going in the right direction.

TODAY'S FIXTURES

Football	League	Time
FA CUP FIRST ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SECOND ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRD ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FOURTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP ELEVENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWELFTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTEENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FOURTEENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTEENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTEENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTEENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTEENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETEENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWENTIETH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWENTY-FIRST ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWENTY-SECOND ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWENTY-THIRD ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWENTY-FOURTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWENTY-FIFTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWENTY-SIXTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWENTY-SEVENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWENTY-EIGHTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP TWENTY-NINTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTIETH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTY-FIRST ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTY-SECOND ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTY-THIRD ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTY-FOURTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTY-FIFTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTY-SIXTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTY-SEVENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTY-EIGHTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP THIRTY-NINTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FORTIETH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FORTY-FIRST ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FORTY-SECOND ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FORTY-THIRD ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FORTY-FOURTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FORTY-FIFTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FORTY-SIXTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FORTY-SEVENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FORTY-EIGHTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FORTY-NINTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTIETH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTY-FIRST ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTY-SECOND ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTY-THIRD ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTY-FOURTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTY-FIFTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTY-SIXTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTY-SEVENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTY-EIGHTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP FIFTY-NINTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTIETH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTY-FIRST ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTY-SECOND ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTY-THIRD ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTY-FOURTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTY-FIFTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTY-SIXTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTY-SEVENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTY-EIGHTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SIXTY-NINTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTIETH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTY-FIRST ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTY-SECOND ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTY-THIRD ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTY-FOURTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTY-FIFTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTY-SIXTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTY-SEVENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTY-EIGHTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP SEVENTY-NINTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTIETH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTY-FIRST ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTY-SECOND ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTY-THIRD ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTY-FOURTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTY-FIFTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTY-SIXTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTY-SEVENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTY-EIGHTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP EIGHTY-NINTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETYTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETY-FIRST ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETY-SECOND ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETY-THIRD ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETY-FOURTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETY-FIFTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETY-SIXTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETY-SEVENTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETY-EIGHTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP NINETY-NINTH ROUND	12.30	12.30
FA CUP HUNDRETH ROUND	12.30	12.30

SPORTING DIGEST

TENNIS

Novotna's joy in New York

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TODAY'S NUMBER

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United at the forefront of the television revolution

Greg Dyke, the television executive and Manchester United director, has said he can envisage the day when the Premiership club - who launch their own channel next season - will have a broadcasting monopoly on all matches at Old Trafford.

Dyke claimed yesterday that United, who already have their own radio station, could one day become the sole broadcaster of home games, and he warned television companies that his club are unlikely to be

the only one to go down the same road towards exclusive rights to their own games.

"I think that eventually clubs will be able to dictate who broadcasts from their grounds. It will not come immediately, but it will come," he said. "Once there are 150 or 200 channels coming into the home - and that could possibly run into thousands in 20 years from now - then it seems to me inevitable that clubs like Manchester United will control their own rights."

At present broadcasting rights for United's league matches are held by the Premiership, while Uefa, European football's governing body, controls European broadcasts. But Dyke, whose election to the Old Trafford board has coincided with the Reds' first venture into their own TV production, said it may not be too long before the clubs take over.

Manchester United TV will go on air next season, but Dyke says it should not be confused with pay-for-view, which is also

in the pipeline. "Manchester United television will be a magazine show which comes some time next year. It'll talk about the club and show youth games and reserve games unless we get permission from the Premiership to show first team games."

"Pay-for-view will come later and it'll be different to television as we have known it up to now. What we have had so far is 'broadcasting' - that is a game available to very large numbers of people.

"The advantage of pay-

for-view is that fans will be able to buy a season ticket and see Manchester United games. That will come in the next five years and it will mean that if you can't get tickets for games you will be able to buy a season ticket and watch them in your home.

"There may not be more than two or three hundred thousand people across the country watching it, and when it comes it will be an addition to the present service."

The League Managers' Association yesterday warned

clubs not to become "fashion victims" by rushing to sign foreign managers.

With Christian Gross, at Tottenham, joining Arsène Wenger and Ruud Gullit and Gross in the top flight, the LMA fears the chances for young British coaches may become more limited.

John Barnwell, the chairman of the LMA, said: "If it gives our coaches a kick up the backside to get more qualifications and improve, then it might be no bad thing. But what we

have to be careful of is that it should not become a fashion or personality appointment.

"We have to leave a way open for young managers to be able to reach the very highest levels of the game."

Critics have suggested that clubs have been forced to look abroad for managers because of a lack of quality coaches in Britain. But Barnwell believes this is not the case, and wants to encourage the movement of managers abroad to create a two-way street.

"Blackburn and Arsenal took a long time to make an appointment because they find it difficult with a code of conduct in place [which prevents clubs poaching other managers from the same division]." He added: "You can't go around just tapping up other managers and clubs respect that code because it protects them."

"I would like to see our managers and coaches extolling their own virtues abroad. We have proved we have some of the best coaches in the world."

Coleman turns down £2.1m move to Keegan's Fulham

Fulham look to have been thwarted in their attempt to continue their spending spree after the purchase of Blackburn defender Chris Coleman fell through when the two parties failed to agree personal terms.

Although Fulham were prepared to break their transfer record - which was only set a few weeks ago with the purchase of Paul Peschscholsky from West Bromwich for £1.2m - with an offer of £2.1m, it seems they were unable to match the player's wages of around £5,000 a week.

Fulham did, however, pay Derby £600,000 yesterday for their midfielder Paul Trollope.

Confusion still surrounds Joe Kinnear's future at Wimbledon after the club declined to comment on speculation that Norway's national coach, Egil Olsen, was set to replace him. Kinnear, who has two years left on his contract, was yesterday trying to seek clarification of his position and did not turn up at the club's training ground.

Kinnear said: "If they want to replace me why don't they come clean about it? If that is the way they carry on behind your back then I don't want to work for them. I knew Egil Olsen was at the game on Saturday and I have heard all the rumours but there is nothing I can do about it. It is out of my hands."

However, a spokesman for the club's Norwegian owner's Wyndmore, played down any talk of Olsen replacing Kinnear. "Olsen had the chance to see four Norwegian players at the same time," Jan Petter Storetvedt said. "It is a source of regret that Joe Kinnear is frustrated, but we don't think he has grounds to be. He has received clear signals that Wimbledon wants him to see the contract out."

Bolton Wanderers have denied their South African defender Mark Fish permission to play for the Rest of the World against Europe in Marseilles on 4 December in an exhibition match which precedes the World

Cup draw. Bolton are concerned at the number of Premiership matches Fish is missing because of international call-ups, a problem which was not helped by yesterday's announcement of his inclusion in the South African national squad to face Brazil on 7 December.

After captaining his side to a 3-1 win over West Ham on Sunday, Leeds defender David Wetherall has signed a new five-year contract with the fourth-placed Premiership side.

Fifa, the governing body of world football, is hoping to succeed where diplomatic efforts have failed by trying to set up a friendly match between Palestine and Israel in New York. The sport's world governing body is holding talks with the Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, about organising the game.

Exeter City's player-coach, Noel Blake, could make his international debut for Jamaica, where he grew up, in the World Cup finals - at the age of 36.

Catherine Riley

CRICKET



Captains united: Graham Gooch (left) and Michael Atherton in the indoor nets at Chelmsford yesterday

Photograph: Peter Jay

Captain Atherton goes back to school

It is not every day that a one-to-one coaching session in an indoor net features 191 Test caps. But then it is not every day that Michael Atherton, troubled by minor defects in his game, consults his illustrious predecessor for a series of "tutorials" before he departs to do battle in the West Indies.

Yesterday Derek Pringle was at Chelmsford to watch.

"Keep looking towards me," shouts Graham Gooch, as he sends another bouncer down at the England captain from 18 yards. "It will help you avoid the odd blow," he adds with a malicious, knowing chuckle, the kind that implies the forthcoming tour of the Caribbean will be about as comforting as going five rounds with Mike Tyson with his gunshield removed.

"Don't get too low. When you do, your head pops outside the line of off-stump," comes

the shout a few balls later, as another bumper causes the back netting to bulge inches behind where Atherton's head had been just before.

For those accustomed to having their cricket nets in April, these may be unlikely sounds to be hearing on a brassy November afternoon. These days, however, the quest for improvement knows no seasons, and Atherton has been afforded a rare opportunity to work on his game. More importantly, it is a chance to work with someone he trusts and who knows him and his game well.

"The nets with Goochie aren't specifically to do with the West Indies tour coming up," the England captain points out, scotching the theory that he is preparing himself for the working over the West Indies' fast bowlers normally reserve for visiting captains. "It's just that over time, things creep into your game, and the Windies tour is the only one which gives you the time to tinker about with your technique and put it in good order."

"If you are going to make adjustments, though, I think it is important to do it with someone who is not coming

from a vastly different standpoint. Graham and I opened the innings together for England about 40 times, so he knows what to look for."

As tutors go, Gooch is undoubtedly a Regius Professor of fast bowling. While all around were getting blown away by the West Indian pace batteries that terrorised batsmen and dominated the world stage for over 15 years, Gooch remained steadfast and unflinching, a granite island in a sea of shattered stumps and bones.

Fortunately, things are not nearly so extreme now. The West Indies have since been toppled from their perch by a resurgent Australia and a line-in on the number of bouncers they can bowl in an over. It is these two factors, along with an ageing new ball attack, that England will be hoping to take advantage of when they tour the Caribbean early in the new year.

However, first they must put runs on the board, and Atherton becomes cagey when I suggest that the importance of seeing off the new ball is paramount to England's chances of winning the Tests series. In any case, whatever it is

that he and Gooch have been tinkering with is not readily divulged, though, by the way the area behind the popping crease is covered with powdered chalk, one suspects it is to do with the movement of his feet.

This is more or less confirmed after the 40-minute net - which includes the Essex bowler Danny Law and a youngster called Damien Brandy - when master and pupil repair to a cubbyhole to analyse the video.

"Your feet were moving superbly," Gooch says. "You didn't get squared up at all today."

"Not bad," counters Atherton nodding, the understatement as blunt and ever present as that famous forward defensive.

For those with a fair smattering of strokes, batting is all about balance and confidence. Yet, as far as Atherton is concerned, both these aspects suffered last summer, as Glenn McGrath - largely on bowler-friendly surfaces - dismissed him time and again, mainly with awkward bouncers between chest and throat high. Trying to evade such deliveries when you have a chronic back problem is easier said

than done, and Atherton struggled, mainly because he was losing his balance and toppling over outside the line of the ball.

Achieving balance the Gooch way, though, is all about co-ordinating your foot and head movement so that you are in a consistent yet relaxed position to play whatever ball is sent down.

"If you're meeting the ball off both back and front foot with your body weight forward and with the full face of the bat, everything else will follow," Gooch says, "and surprise bouncers won't catch you out of position, like they occasionally did with Atherton last summer."

"Mike has as good a technique as anyone, probably since Geoff Boycott. But that doesn't mean it's OK to stand still. You've got to keep pressing for improvements. Bowlers do and I can see the likes of Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh perhaps targeting Mike with short balls to the ribcage."

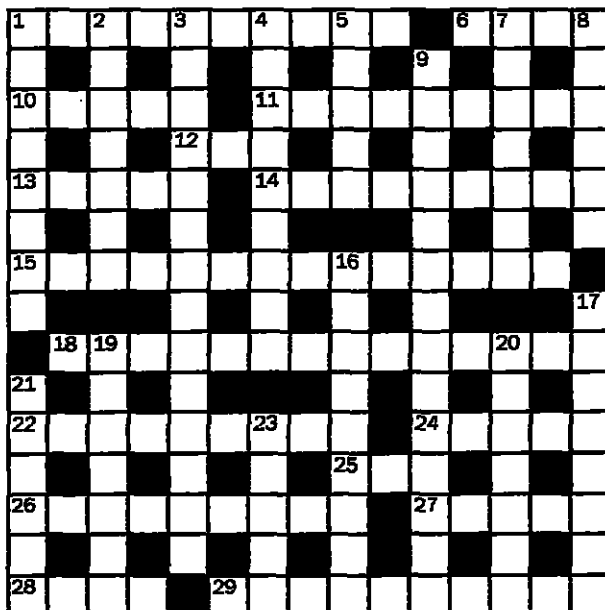
It was the first time the tutor had stated the obvious, but as he and many batsmen will know from facing fast bowling, expecting it and playing are two quite different matters.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3465, Tuesday 25 November

By Andrew

Monday's Solution



ACROSS

- 1 Doctor meant to change drug? (10)
- 6 Drink nothing returning from work (4)
- 10 Sound of conservative's tedious to Scotland (5)
- 11 I'm British, designing logo with one in perplexing situation (9)
- 12 A weak name for beard (3)
- 13 Piece of machinery to display decay on gold (5)
- 14 Epithet given to bisque could be about right (9)
- 15 Plain man's return from such sales? (4,3,7)
- 18 Father's camp discipline is the result of quackery? (6,8)
- 22 Women awfully scared about new American signs of hostility (3,6)
- 24 Illegal seller catches river fish (5)
- 25 One's out of place having Romanian coin (3)
- 26 Walk to concert upset English Dean (9)
- 27 Lift sappers, suppressing instances of sloth (5)
- 28 No indication of pain in cowardly shout (4)
- 29 Clerks who try to sell things to sheep farmers? (3-7)

DOWN

- 1 Satellite controls a vehicle which consumers might like (8)
- 2 Simple boat in river is enough for US conscript (7)
- 3 Times of smoking? (9,5)
- 4 Sail could produce power with these changes (9)
- 5 New woman's haircut entrances a rich easterner (5)
- 7 Cut up old instrument and spoil the environment (7)
- 8 Debated, when surrounded by quiet, without irregularities (6)
- 9 Old cinema movement reportedly chose to upset user (6,8)
- 16 Perhaps peels to go to bed for excessive spell? (9)
- 17 Anxiously awaiting right second in formation of steels (8)
- 19 Perhaps fan of tune characteristic of jazz (3-4)
- 20 Love fancy dories (7)
- 21 To work wrapping wife in minimally laminated material (3-3)
- 23 Taking care to be correct about name of bird (5)

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Join the Claret & Blue Army.

Sheff Wed vs Aston Villa live from 6.30 tonight on 5

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